

**NEW NORMAL PRACTICE IN SCHOOL RESOURCES
CENTRE DURING COVID-19 IN SECONDARY
SCHOOLS IN WILAYAH PERSEKUTUAN
KUALA LUMPUR**

BY

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**A dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirement for
the degree of Master in Library and Information Science**

**Kulliyyah of Information and Communication Technology
International Islamic University Malaysia**

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation reports the new normal practices in School Resources Centre (SRC), during the COVID-19 in Secondary Schools in Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur. The research has explored some of the circumstances and practices in the SRC new-normal era of the pandemic. The objectives of the research were to explore the current situation and practice in SRCs during the new-normal era, to identify the SRC exit plan to operate during the COVID-19 pandemic, and to identify some of the challenges faced by Library Media Teacher (LMT) during this period. The research questions were also formulated based on the objectives. Survey questionnaires and interviews were applied to gather the data used for the research. The population of the research comprised all the LMT in secondary schools around Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur. The questionnaires were distributed to the 104 LMT through their school email, of which only 82 responded and three of them also agreed to be interviewed. The findings of the research have provided an overview of the real situations in the SRC and its readiness in adapting to the new normal practices during the COVID-19 crisis. The findings will also be of great benefit to institutions that are interested in developing policies and practices regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. The long-term benefits of the research will provide some sort of recommendations for the SRCs to seek improvements in aligning their roles in supporting quality education and information services during the COVID-19 crisis in their school community.

خلاصة البحث

وتشير هذه الدراسة إلى الممارسات العادية الجديدة في مركز الموارد المدرسية، خلال الـ COVID-19 في المدارس الثانوية في ولاية بيرسيكوتوان كوالالمبور. وقد استكشف البحث بعض الظروف والممارسات في الحقبة الطبيعية الجديدة من الوباء في لجنة الإنقاذ. وتمثلت أهداف البحث في استكشاف الوضع الحالي والممارسة في مراكز التنسيق الخاصة خلال الحقبة الطبيعية الجديدة، وتحديد خطة خروج لجنة الإنقاذ العليا للعمل خلال جائحة COVID-19، وتحديد بعض التحديات التي واجهها مدرس الإعلام بالمكتبة خلال هذه الفترة. كما صيغت الأسئلة البحثية استنادا إلى الأهداف. تم تطبيق استبيانات المسح والمقابلات لجمع البيانات المستخدمة في البحث. شمل عدد سكان البحث جميع LMT في المدارس الثانوية حول ولاية بيرسيكوتوان كوالالمبور. ووزعت الاستبيانات على 104 LMT من خلال البريد الإلكتروني المدرسي، منها 82 فقط أجابوا وثلاثة منهم وافقوا أيضا على إجراء مقابلات معهم. وقد قدمت نتائج البحث لمحة عامة عن الأوضاع الحقيقية في لجنة الإنقاذ الخاصة واستعدادها للتكيف مع الممارسات العادية الجديدة خلال أزمة COVID-19. كما ستكون النتائج ذات فائدة كبيرة للمؤسسات المهمة بتطوير سياسات وممارسات فيما يتعلق بوباء COVID-19. وستوفر الفوائد الطويلة الأجل للبحوث نوعا من التوصيات للبلدان النامية السلوفاكية سعيا إلى إدخال تحسينات على مواءمة أدوارها في دعم خدمات التعليم والمعلومات الجيدة خلال أزمة COVID-19 في مجتمعها المدرسي.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Library and Information Science.

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DECLARATION

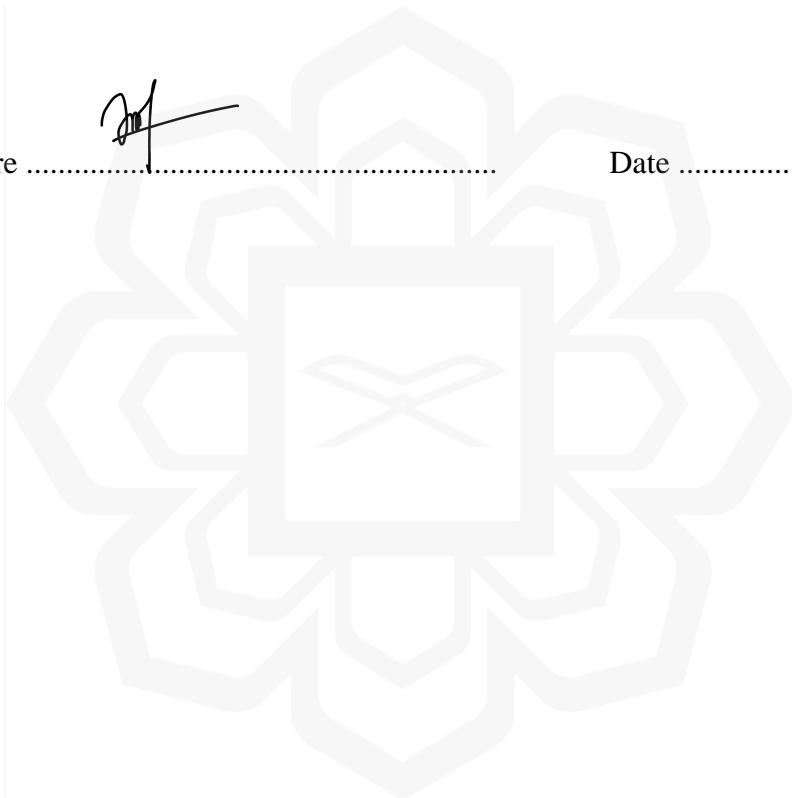
I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The school library in Malaysia, also known as the School Resource Centre (SRC) has been a vital and important part of the school community system. The existence of the school library in every school has been to provide quality educational resources and provide other related information services to the school community. In many instances, the SRC has been managed by the librarian or the Library Media Teacher (LMT) (Hashim et al., 2020). Contemporary, the SRC is not more a place for people to borrow books and other related information resources for learning, but it is now a place that encourages creativity, student interest, and a reference place for students' academic problem-solving. According to the IFLA (2015), School Resource Centre (SRC) is a school's physical or digital learning space where reading, inquiry, research, thinking, imagination, and creativity services were offered to the students. It is also a place where the information-to-knowledge journey, social, and cultural growth are bread in the children's minds. The library has been the school's main knowledge warehouse, and it's meant to be a place where students should visit often to get current information and add to their knowledge. This makes it very important for the schools and the library management to make sure that the library premises were safe and always make ready for the user to come and utilize their services.

Towards the end of the year 2019, the world was faced with the emergence of an epidemic, which was caused by the novel coronavirus that broke out around Wuhan in China (Guo Y et al., 2019). This epidemic was identified as a type of zoonotic disease that comes from the family of mammals that has infected a group of humans that later

spread into disease outbreaks. According to Healthcare (2020), an epidemic is a disease that affects many people from a community population or region. This current disease causes respiratory illness, like flu. It also has some symptoms such as cough, fever, and in more severe cases it could cause difficulty in breathing (Singhal T. A, 2020). With time, the number of infected cases of this disease rose sharply and spread globally within a short period. This makes the World Health Organization (WHO) declare this novel coronavirus a global health emergency on 30 January 2020. Two weeks later, the WHO announced that the coronavirus which was now known as Coronavirus Disease of the year 2019 (COVID-19) became a global pandemic on 11th March 2020 (WHO, 2020).

According to Kelly (2011), a pandemic is an epidemic that occurs worldwide or over a very large area, crosses international borders and usually affects many people. In this situation, most academic, business, and other related physically interactive activities between humans were put under control. This has also included the school library systems, which were all put under look down, to maintain the social distancing rule that was put in place by the government to control the spread of the pandemic (IFLA, 2020). Many schools were also closed globally around March 2020, and students, teachers and librarians all remained home (Oyelude, 2020).

1.1.1 Malaysia Respond to the COVID-19

As the virus turned into a pandemic, and with the absence of an effective vaccine or antiviral drugs to fight the disease. The governments together with the health workers designed some protective measures and initiatives for the people to follow, to be protected from this disease. (Harris, 2021). A large-scale policy on social restrictions in some areas and a large-scale policy on restrictions concerning the introduction of work-

from-home policies for all industries, with some exceptions, like the transportation, banking, and health workers were allowed to operate physically with some measures also. (Harris, 2021).

Malaysia recorded the first positive case of the COVID-19 virus in mid-January 2020, and gradually after then, the number of positive infected cases was seen to be increasing within the first two months (Bernama. 2020, Feb 04). Visualizing the upcoming threat, the Government of Malaysia quickly enforce the first phase of the Movement Control Order (MCO) which started on the 18 of March 2020, which has been extended to several phases to date (Bunyan, 2020). The MCO was seen to be one of the best measures in controlling the spread of this virus. According to Tang (2020), movement control and social distance have been among the most effective means of controlling the COVID-19 pandemic. As a Muslim, the implementation of the MCO was also under the tradition of our beloved Prophet SAW which stated that: *“When you hear it (epidemic) in a place, then do not go there. And when it happens in your place, then do not you get out of it.”*

(Hadith narrated by Imam Muslim)

During the Movement Control Order (MCO), all commercial and some government premises including the schools were ordered to close. Until the end of the MCO period. This has made a lot of schools decide on alternative ways of operation. Subsequently, the schools were allowed to operate under some new norms, where they operate with stricter measures. A few steps safety and precautionary measures need to practice preventing the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. As we forward towards a “new normal” and the phases of reopening, the library will continue to be a safe place also, where the public can go physically to have access to information and resources (MacDonald, 2020).

Similarly, the school resources center, with no exception after the MCO ends, some guidelines were created on their operations by the ministry. This new guideline was also known as *Garis Panduan Pengoperasian Pusat Sumber Sekolah Pasca Peraturan Kawalan Pergerakan* (Persatuan Pustakawan Malaysia, June 2020). The guideline was first proposed by the Committee of School Resource Centre and Malaysian Library Association on the 4th of Jun 2020. Since the operation of the School Resource Centre is like that of the school library, these same guidelines have been used as a reference to help the management and the administrative staff of the school library to operate. The school teachers as well as the other school non-academic staff were also taught how to take all necessary and precautionary measures, like practising social distancing, avoiding congestion, and improving their hygiene practices while at the School Resource Centre when the school resumes its physical operations after the MCO ends. These guidelines have also assisted in minimizing the risk of COVID-19 virus infection among school residents, most especially those working in the School Resource Centre (Persatuan Pustakawan Malaysia, June 2020).

1.1.2 New Normal Practices During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The world today is passing through a very tough time, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This scenario has been unprecedented and confusing to many, the practising of social distancing, the use of masks, cleaning and sanitizing our hands and other physical surroundings, etc., the mobility restrictions for our daily activities and profession, etc have all been affected by the pandemic and this makes the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared it as a global pandemic.

People are now learning how to survive in this new normal era after the COVID-19 pandemic, because of the many new and unusual activities and behaviors that were

now implemented in our daily life and operations. Putsanra (2020), also stated that this new normal life will require many changes in our behavior, in keeping with our normal activities and the application of health protocols to prevent virus transmission. Individuals need to change their habits and adjust their relationships with the community, beginning with a ban on attending large gatherings and to remain at home when it is not necessary to go out (Oyelude, 2020).

During this new normal period of the COVID-19, several preventive measures need to be practised, such as reducing the facial contact and maintaining the social/physical distance, mask-wearing in public spaces, maintaining regular hand-sanitizing with an alcohol-based sanitizer, increasing the handwashing with soap and water, maintaining good respiratory hygiene, and frequent temperature checking, are all aimed at preventing the spread of the disease. People must also learn to maintain a safe distance of 1m in public places, such as in the streets, public transport, department stores, and even in schools, to control the spread of the virus from our droplets (CDC, 2020). In addition, people also need to adjust their daily activities from physical-oriented to contactless-oriented in this new normal era.

According to research by Hoffman, et al (2021), five basic prevention measures need to be put in place, to reopen the schools. Although, these measures have already been put into action in over 49 countries of the globe to control the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. Physical distancing/minimizing contact,
2. Hygiene and cleaning,
3. Health screening,
4. School schedule/operations and
5. Personal protective equipment (PPE)/physical barriers.

In Malaysia, this basic measure has also been included in the *Garis Panduan Pengoperasian Pusat Sumber Sekolah Pasca Peraturan Kawalan Pergerakan* (Persatuan Pustakawan Malaysia, June 2020). This guideline has aimed to reduce and control the spread of the virus among the teachers, students, library staff as well as anyone who visited the SRC. Maintain a healthy environment during the operation of the SRC and the library media teacher (LMT) was responsible to ensure the operating and services of SRC complied with the Standard Procedure (SOP).

1.1.3 Primary and Secondary Schools in Malaysia

Education plays a key role in realizing Malaysia's aspirations to be a developed nation. In Malaysia, formal education has five levels, namely pre-school, primary school, lower secondary, upper secondary, and advanced source from the Malaysia government portal at (<https://www.malaysia.gov.my/portal/index>). Pre-school level starts as early as the ages of children 4, 5, and 6 years. The second level of education is for children aged 7 to 12 years. The education is continued to secondary school level for another 5 or 6 years (KBSM). At the end of each level of education, students will sit for public examinations. The ability of students to complete this educational system will also allow them to further their studies at a higher level, either in the universities or related training centers (S. Hussin et.al, 2010).

There are about 6,152 pre-schools, 7,772 numbers of primary schools and 2,436 numbers of secondary schools under the Malaysia Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education, 19 February 2019). Table 1.1 contains the list of the number of schools, Enrolment, and teachers in 2019 in the country for the academic year.

Table 1.1 Number of schools, Enrolment, and teachers (2019)

	Schools	Enrolment			Teachers		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Pre-school*	6,152	103,628	101,572	205,200	1,091	8,220	9,311
Primary**	7,772	1,398,201	1,328,560	2,726,761	70,025	167,292	237,317
Secondary**	2,436	999,074	1,008,422	2,007,496	53,717	128,870	182,587
TOTAL	10,208	2,397,275	2,336,982	4,734,257	123,742	296,162	419,782

Note : 1. Data only covers educational institutions under MOE
2. Total excludes pre-school
3. Data enrolment as of 31st January 2019
Source : * National Information System for Pre-school (SMPK - Data as of 31st January 2019)
** APDM (Data as of 31st January 2019)

From the total number of 7,772 primary schools under the Ministry of Education (MoE), which also include 5,872 National schools. Among which are 1,298 National Type (Chinese), 525 National Type (Tamil), 28 of Special Education, 8 of Special Model (K9), and 41 of Government Aided Religious School (GARS) (Ministry of Education, 19 February 2019). Table 1.2 below also contains the list of the number of primary schools in the country from 2017 until 2019.

Table 1.2 Number of primary schools (2017-2019)

Type of Schools	2017			2018			2019		
	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total
National	1,331	4,547	5,878	1,329	4,548	5,877	1,324	4,548	5,872
National Type (C)	502	796	1,298	503	795	1,298	503	795	1,298
National Type (T)	137	387	524	137	387	524	138	387	525
Special Education	20	8	28	20	8	28	20	8	28
Special Model (K9)	0	8	8	0	8	8	0	8	8
Government Aided Religious School (GARS)	15	25	40	15	26	41	15	26	41
TOTAL	2,005	5,771	7,776	2,004	5,772	7,776	2,000	5,772	7,772

Note : Data as of 31st January 2019
Source : Educational Planning and Research Division

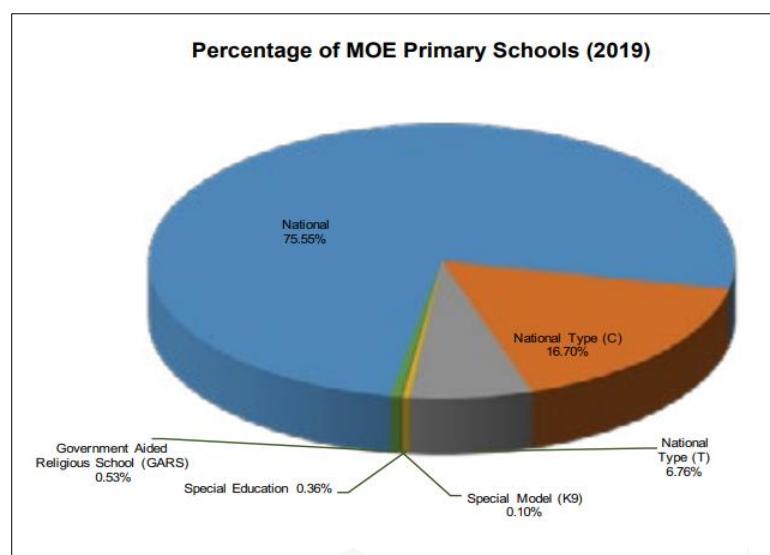


Figure 1.1 Percentage of MoE Primary Schools (2019)

From the total number of 2,436 secondary schools under MOE, which also includes the 1,984 Regular, 69 Fully Residential, 60 Religious, 9 Technical, 87 Vocational College, 6 Special Education, 11 Special Model, 5 Sports, 3 Arts, 180 Government Aided Religious School (GARS), 1 Bimbingan Jalanan Kasih, and 21 Form Six College (Ministry of Education, 19 February 2019). Table 1.3 contains the list of the number of secondary schools from 2017 until 2019.

Table 1.3 Number of secondary schools (2017-2019)

Type of Schools	2017			2018			2019		
	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total
Regular	943	1,047	1,990	937	1,045	1,982	935	1,049	1,984
Fully Residential	34	35	69	34	35	69	34	35	69
Religious	27	30	57	27	32	59	27	33	60
Technical	8	1	9	8	1	9	8	1	9
Vocational College	45	35	80	49	38	87	49	38	87
Special Education	5	1	6	5	1	6	5	1	6
Special Model	3	8	11	3	8	11	3	8	11
Sports	4	1	5	4	1	5	4	1	5
Arts	3	0	3	3	0	3	3	0	3
Government Aided Religious School (GARS)	54	126	180	54	126	180	54	126	180
Bimbingan Jalanan Kasih	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1
Form Six College	0	0	0	9	5	14	14	7	21
TOTAL	1,127	1,284	2,411	1,134	1,292	2,426	1,137	1,299	2,436

Note : Data as of 31st January 2019
Source : Educational Planning and Research Division

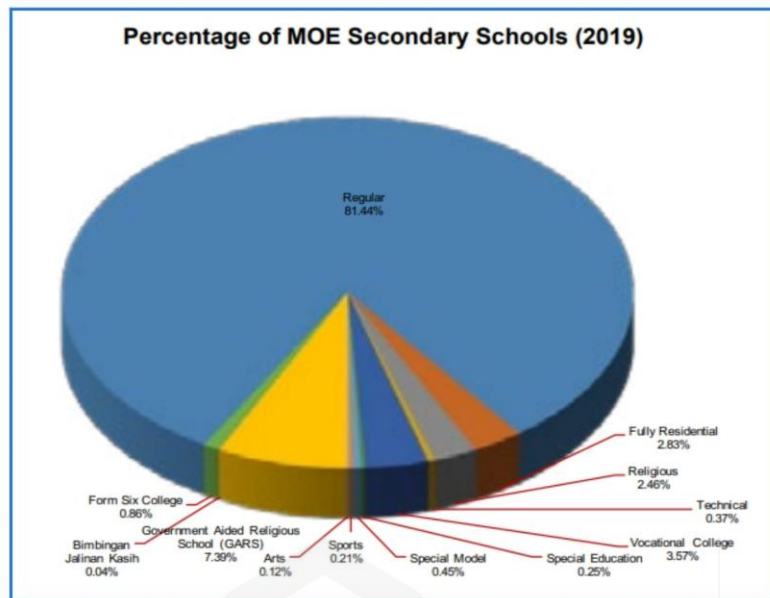


Figure 1.2 Percentage of MoE Secondary Schools (2019)

For this research, the researcher has only focused on secondary schools in Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur. As a capital city of Malaysia country, the school libraries in this location have good and reliable internet coverage and other related infrastructures. The chosen of secondary school over primary school because secondary schools consist of various types of schools such as academic schools, technical and vocational schools, special education schools and religious national schools as compared to primary schools consist of national schools or national type schools only (<https://www.moe.gov.my/dasarmenu/sistem-pendidikan>). It makes this research more comprehensive to overview the school library during this pandemic period. In addition, this state is still in MCO with highest of COVID-19 daily cases besides Johor, Sabah and Selangor (CPRC Kebangsaan, 2021).

1.2 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research was to investigate the current states and practices in the schools' resources centers (SRC) within the secondary schools in Kuala Lumpur,

Malaysia during the new-normal era of the COVID-19 pandemic and since their reopening period. It is hoped that the findings from this research will become a platform for further research by those institutions that are interested in the development of policies and practices to manage the COVID-19 pandemic. The research can also assist other SRC with the most appropriate practice in reopening the SRC in the new normal era during the COVID-19 pandemic and the long-term purpose is to provide recommendations for these SRC to seek improvements.

According to Crichton, Ramsay, and Kelly (2009) organizations should enhance resilience through emergency planning and the best way to do it is by learning from others. So, it is hoped that this research will also help many organizations in the county, in identifying their weaknesses to improve their organization services and to be further prepared for any future occurrence.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Until 31st of December 2020, the daily number of positive cases of the COVID-19 infections in Malaysia has been high, in 2020 about 2,525 cases were recorded (Malaysiakini, 31 Dec 2020), and in January 2021 the daily cases drastically increased by almost 100%; and now more than four thousand cases (<http://covid-19.moh.gov.my/>). To avoid the virus transmission, the school that was scheduled to reopen on the 20th of January 2021 was postponed to reopening in March (Ministry of Education, 2021, February 19).

The recent COVID-19 pandemic has made a way for the library and the media teachers to learn more about the pandemic, and the way to maintain the SRC services with proper care and protection from the spread of the pandemic. There have been several services in the SRC that require special attention during the pandemic situation,

such as the circulation, processing, and handling of library materials, reference services, acquisition, usage of library computer labs, reading room, audio-visual room, and even teaching & learning materials room. In every stage of these listed services, the library staff needs to interact with the users as well as library materials. This was why this study has also attempted to provide a better understanding of the COVID-19, its mode of transformation, and some measure to be considered when reopening the SRC services to the users. With a proper understanding of the pandemic, library staff can perform well in re-opening SRC. Similarly, in the future time, they will also learn how to manage their services in similar conditions and provide a better post-pandemic experience for patrons in the SRC reopening.

In Malaysia, there has been a guideline to be applied to prevent the virus transmission among the teachers, students, library staff, which was known as *Garis Panduan Pengoperasian Pusat Sumber Sekolah Pasca Peraturan Kawalan Pergerakan* (Persatuan Pustakawan Malaysia, June 2020). Through these guidelines, the SRC was now changed with a new phase or "new normal", in which they must operate with stricter measures. But, to what extent will this new normal be practised in the school resource center?

Most of the literature that has been published on the practices of libraries and the challenges during the new normal era has been focused on the large academic libraries and public libraries (Winata et al., 2020; Mbambo, 2020; Tesar, 2020; Carbery et al., 2020). There has not been a great effort to explore the practices of smaller libraries, most especially the school libraries during the period of the pandemic. Only a few studies have focused on this issue, among which are that of Ahlfeld, K. (2020), Gordon (2020), Hoffman, et al (2021), and Viner et al. (2020). The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) has also done "snapshot surveys" to highlight