

Survey of Security Challenges in University Libraries in Southwest Nigeria

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This study investigates security challenges in university libraries in Southwest Nigeria. Questionnaires and interviews were used to collect data for the study. Findings from the study revealed that university libraries in Southwest Nigeria are confronted with security challenges. The challenges include noise making through the use of cell phone, theft, mutilation, and defacement of library materials and hiding of book to prevent other users from having access to them. The study also found that textbooks, serial publications, and reference materials were the materials highly susceptible to abuse by users. The problems are attributed to factors like a harsh economic situation that makes it difficult for library users to buy books and ineffective library security systems. The study recommended adequate and effective security through recruitment, training, and retraining of security personnel; purchase of multiple copies of materials in high demand; provision of photocopying services; adequate training and education for library staff and users on the effects of crime on library services; and tough punishment for perpetrators of library crimes.

KEYWORDS *antisocial behavior, library abuse, library crime, library security, Nigeria, university libraries*

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Received 25 June 2013; accepted 2 October 2013.

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INTRODUCTION

Libraries of all sizes all over the world are confronted with security and crime challenges that have negatively affected their operations and service delivery. The situation is pathetic in African libraries where valuable information resources are lost to these vices. Crime and security challenges commonly reported in libraries include theft and mutilation of library material, defacement, harassment, verbal and physical assault of library staff, arson, personal theft (from staff and users), and vandalism of library building, equipment, and stock.

The losses incurred by libraries through this antisocial behavior cannot be estimated. Quoting Keele, Ewing (1994) states that U.K. losses could amount to £100 million per year. Losses incurred by libraries on crime include money and intellectual property but, in most cases, intellectual property losses outweigh monetary loss. Commenting on the impact of theft on libraries, McDonald (1992) posited that theft costs money but in terms of their cost to scholarship and, all too frequently, to the national heritage. Library crimes are reported by all types of libraries all over the world; the situation is more pronounced among academic libraries especially in Africa. In Nigeria, for example, there are reported cases of theft of library materials. One of these examples is the theft at the Federal University of Technology, Akure where a 20-volume set of a 2003 edition of the McGraw-Hill *Encyclopedia of Science and Technology* was lost. Security challenges are rampant in academic libraries owing to their peculiarity. Being an academic environment, students and lecturers have access to the library resources, and this makes library materials vulnerable to vices like theft, mutilation, and defacement.

Academic libraries in Africa are prone to security and crime owing to factors like poor funding of libraries, which has incapacitated libraries from buying multiple copies of books; increased student enrollments, placing greater pressure on collections; and weak local publishing institutions, which make African libraries depend on foreign publications with high costs due to unfavorable exchange rates of local-to-foreign currencies. The economic recession of the 1980s and 1990s and the present economic meltdown had also taken their tolls on the purchasing power of students and their parents. Abuse and library crime cut across every strata of the society from staff and students to lecturers and from clerics to the downtrodden.

Effectiveness of an academic library is based on how the library materials are accessible for teaching and learning and how the library environment is secured for effective service delivery by library staff. In an atmosphere of chaos where life and materials are prone to one crime or another, it will be difficult for a library to fulfill its responsibility and assist the institution in achieving its goals. Therefore, library materials and environment in which libraries operate should be devoid of crimes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature is replete with library crime that include theft and mutilation of library materials, defacement, verbal and physical assault of staff, harassment, arson, vandalism hacking, and unauthorized access to information in the computer system: (Akinfolarin 1992; Chaney and McDougall 1992; Ajayi 2003; Adewale 2007; Adewuyi and Adekanye 2011. Crime is an antisocial behavior that affects all sectors of our society. Akussah and Bentil (2010) observed that abuse of library materials is prevalent in all types of libraries in all parts of the world; the intensity may vary from library to library. This position buttressed the view of Lincoln and Lincoln (1986) that crime in libraries mirrored crime in communities in which they were situated. Crime is increasing at a spectacular and frightening rate in all sections of the society, and criminal activity of one sort or another is now affecting every type of library and information service (Chaney and McDougall 1992).

Writing on the dearth of literature and poor attitude of library management to library crime, Chaney and McDougall (1992) lamented that crime as a management issue in libraries and information services has, on the evidence of scant literature available, received relatively little attention by the profession, and what has been written is mainly anecdotal and noticeably lacking in management-oriented approach.

Eyo (2008) reported that deviant behavior such as book mutilation and hiding of books between shelves in academic libraries was found to be high and had affected lending services and book use in academic libraries in Cross River State, Nigeria. According to Adewale (2007), circulation reports at the Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife shows that 24 volumes of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* were carted away in September 1997 and more than 20 titles of previously stolen medical books were dropped at the main entrance of the library. In October 1997, another set was also found in the same place. In 1998 alone, more than 200 back and front covers of books from which the contents had already been removed were found in various reading rooms and inside shelves.

Ewing (1994) affirmed that theft of materials such as books, cassettes, and other items held by libraries primarily for loan is only one type of abuse; current literature suggests that other forms include non-return of items by borrowers. Omotayo and Ajayi (2005/2006) reported that mis-shelving constitutes a special crime carried out by students who deliberately hide books in places you would not expect to find them.

Writing on misuse of computers, Davies (1992) opined that misuse of computers and related IT equipment is a growing problem for society in general, costing a great deal of time and money. He considered computer misuse to include apparent willful damage to a library housekeeping system; suspected theft in transit of CD ROM equipment; burglary of new (and installed) branch library circulation system hardware; unauthorized

borrowing of instructional software programs; to say nothing of several losses of personal computers and associated machinery.

The library is supposed to be a silent place for meaningful reading to take place. Not surprisingly, noise within and outside a library constitutes another barrier to effective use of library to library users. A study by Ntui (2009) revealed that noise levels in the library of the University of Calabar were high, exceeded acceptable standards for educational institutions, and constituted a distraction to library users. According to her, noise from automobiles, airplanes, and cell phone callers and receivers constituted the major noise recorded in the library.

Causes of theft according to Senyah (2004) include under-resourcing as libraries were unable to provide adequate numbers of essential textbooks and journals for users, increased numbers of students, poor funding, and poverty of parents and guidance reflected in the poor purchasing power exhibited by students in tertiary institutions. He also attributed library theft to poor security, absent-mindedness, forgetfulness, and selfishness. He reported that some students of Kwame Nkrumah University Science and Technology, Ghana, stole and vandalized library materials out of selfish motivations.

Writing on the perpetrators of library theft, McDougall (1992) posited that neither are book thefts confined to hardened criminals; they are perpetrated by people of different status from staff and users to clergymen, lawyers, psychologists, and the most reputable professional researchers. Library staff themselves may also contribute to the losses either by deliberate theft or failure to return items. Senyah (2004) reported that both library staff and students were culpable in theft and mutilation of library materials.

It was found that book theft was highly correlated with the number of patrons, as was intentional damage of books. Both of these offenses may be symptoms of perceived shortage of resources. Smethurst in McDonald (1992) suggests that there may well be a close relationship between book losses and policies for loan, especially for book in heavy demand; as pressure to gain access to valued material increases, patrons may start to use illegitimate means to get what they want. A study by Akussa and Bentil (2010) revealed that 70% of the library staff who were surveyed considered that limited copies of library materials was the main factor accounting for abuse of library materials. It was also reported that inadequate photocopying machines and fear of not finding materials on the next visit are motivating factors.

On the measures to prevent and minimize crime and abuse of library materials, McDonald (1992) believed that total security is unattainable and probably unworkable in a service organization; all steps should be taken to prevent or deter crime and reduce the security risks to which resources are exposed. He suggested that since crime cannot be eradicated, emphasis must be on prevention—through effective security (making the act difficult, if not impossible, to perform) and through legal deterrents or disincentives (maximizing the likelihood of being found out and punished).

Ewing (1994) suggested that in order to make progress in this field, libraries must improve their stock inventories and, importantly, the regularity with which these are carried out must be established. It is necessary to determine whether losses are increasing, decreasing, or remaining static. Ewing also called for notices warning users to keep check on their belongings at all times and suggested book amnesties might be introduced when all other methods to get defaulters to return borrowed books failed. Ewing suggested among other things:

1. controlled access to stock through turnstiles,
2. deposit by users of all bags, briefcases, etc. in cloakrooms before entering libraries,
3. physical search of all bags at the exit desks by security attendants,
4. installation of electronic book detection systems,
5. redesigning of entrances for better observation/control purposes,
6. closed circuit TV,
7. extra uniformed security staff to patrol the library, and
8. permanent locking of all windows in departments holding library materials.

Ajayi (2003) reported the efficacies of closed-access policies as an effective crime control strategy at the Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library and recommended it for other libraries. Senyah (2004) recommended installation of an electronic security system, user education, patrolling security guard, public relation campaign, posters, book amnesty week, students involvement, strong fines, enforcement of sanctions, monitoring library staff, photocopying services, multiple copies of recommended books, and so on as crime control measure in libraries.

METHODOLOGY

The targeted population for this study is academic librarians and library officers in the public university libraries in Southwest Nigeria. Justification for this population stems from the fact that the population comprises people directly working with human and material resources in the library and acquainted with library crime and abuse of library resources.

Two data collection instruments were used for this study. These are questionnaire and interview. However, the major data collection instrument was a questionnaire. A self-constructed questionnaire—tagged Library Crime and Material Abuse—with four sections was designed. The first section elicited basic profile information on respondents including age, job tenure, gender, place of work, and rank. The second section was devoted to crime challenges in university libraries. The third section focused on

TABLE 1 Distribution of Respondents by University Library

	University Libraries	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Ekiti State University Library, Ado-Ekiti	10	9.52
2	Adekunle Ajasin University Library, Akungba Akoko	7	6.7
3	Federal University of Agriculture Library, Abeokuta	10	9.52
4	University of Lagos Library, Akoka Lagos	11	10.5
5	Olabisi Onabanjo University Library, Ago Iwoye	12	11.42
6	Federal University of Technology Library, Akure	13	12.4
7	Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife	15	14.3
8	Olusegun Oke Library, Ladoke Akintola University, Ogbomosho	5	4.8
9	Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan	12	11.42
10	Fatiu Akesode Library, Lagos State University, Ojo	10	9.52
	Total	105	100

the susceptibility of library materials to abuse by users, while the fourth section was dedicated to punishments and measures put in place to address crime and material abuse in the studied libraries. The questionnaire was validated by giving a preliminary draft version to librarians at the Federal University of Technology, Akure and to lecturers at the University of Ibadan, Department of Library, Archival and Information Studies for their comments and suggestions, which then informed the final draft of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was randomly administered to 150 academic librarians and library officers in 10 university libraries used for the study. Of the 150 copies of the questionnaire administered, 105 (70%) were returned and found valid for analysis. The distribution of respondents by university library is presented in Table 1.

Also, an unstructured interview was conducted by researchers with librarians and library officers in selected libraries. Four academic librarians and two library officers were interviewed. Of the four librarians interviewed, two were heads of library. Content analysis was used for analysis.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Distribution of respondents by gender indicates that 55 (52.4%) were male while 50 (47.6%) were female. Distribution of respondents by academic qualification shows that 4 (3.8%) are PhD degree holders; 74 (70.5%) had master's degrees in library science; 20 (19.0%) had a bachelor's degree; 3 (2.09%) had a higher national diploma; and 4 (3.8%) had ordinary national diploma.

TABLE 2 Types of Library Crimes

Library Crimes	Freq.	%
Theft and mutilation of library materials	89	84.8
Vandalism	50	47.6
Defacement of library materials	89	84.8
Arson	8	7.5
Verbal and physical assault of library staff	60	57.1
Eating and drinking in the library	80	76.2
Hiding of books to prevent access by other users	87	82.9
Late return of borrowed library materials	81	77.1
Noise making in the library	82	78.1
Pilfering	37	35.2
Burglary	14	13.3
Sexual harassment	5	4.8
Unauthorized dubbing of VHS, CD, DVD	5	4.8
Refusal to pay overdue fine	41	39.8
Smoking in the library	50	4.8
Using cell phone in the library	90	85.7
Fighting in the library	19	18.1
Unwillingness to renew library registration	51	48.6
Using Internet to commit cybercrimes	17	16.2
Hacking of computed information	14	13.3
Violation of copyright law (photocopying of whole textbook)	50	47.6

Distribution of respondents by designation shows that 6 (5.71%) are deputy university librarian; 17 (16.2%) are principal librarian; 13 (12.4%) are senior librarian; 20 (19.0%) are librarian i; 19(18.1%) are librarian ii; 15 (14.3%) are higher library officer; and 15 (14.3%) are library officers.

Distribution of respondents by years of experience shows that 5 (4.8%) had worked for 30 years and more; 10 (9.5%) had worked for between 25 and 29 years; 9 (8.6%) had worked for 20 to 24 years; 8 (7.6%) had worked for between 16 and 19 years; 21 (20%) had worked for 10 to 14 years; 17 (16.2%) had worked for between 6 and 9 years; and 35 (33.3%) had worked for 1 to 5 years.

Respondents were asked whether they had crime and security challenges in their library; 95 (90.5%) of respondents agreed that they had crime and security challenges in their library while 10 (9.5%) disagreed.

Table 2 represents types of security challenges confronting university libraries. Respondents were asked about the types of crimes always committed in their libraries. Use of cell phones in the library, 90 (85%); theft and mutilation and defacement of library materials, 89 (84.4%), respectively; hiding of books to prevent access by others users, 87 (82.9%); late return of borrowed books, 81 (77.1%); noise making in the library, 82 (78.1%); and eating in the library, 80 (76.2%) constitute the highest crimes committed in the libraries. The least types of crimes recorded are arson, 8 (7.5%) and sexual harassment and unauthorized dubbing of VHS, CD, DVD, with 5 (4.8%),

TABLE 3 Mean Score and Standard Deviation of Susceptibility of Material to Crime

Type of Information Material	Mean X	Std. Deviation
Textbooks	3.59	.83
Serial publications (scientific journals, newspapers)	2.79	1.09
CD ROMs databases	1.62	.92
VHS, CD DVD	1.45	.81
Special collections (reports, govt. publications)	2.07	1.03
Microforms (microfilms, microfiches, etc.)	1.35	.68
Reference materials (encyclopedias, dictionaries, handbooks, etc.)	2.69	1.15

respectively, On the question of whether their materials were susceptible to abuse by library users 75 (71.4%) of respondents believed that their materials are susceptible to abuse while 30 (28.6%) responded that their materials were not susceptible to abuse.

Respondents were asked how often the crimes are committed in their libraries: 36 (34.3%) responded daily; 18 (17.1%) weekly; 11 (10.5%) monthly; 18 (17.1%) quarterly; and 22 (21.0) yearly.

Respondents were asked about the susceptibility of their library information resources to abuse by library users. They were asked to rate the level of susceptibility on a four scale of not susceptible, average susceptible, moderately susceptible, and highly susceptible. Mean score and standard deviation of susceptibility indicated that all the library materials were susceptible to abuse (Table 3). Textbooks were the most highly susceptible to abuse followed by serial publications, reference materials, and special collections.

On the perpetrators of library crimes, respondents were asked about the category of users who were mostly involved in library crime; students with 101 (96.2%) had the highest numbers of respondents, while non-academic staff and library security staff with 7 (6.7%) and 4 (3.8%) had the least respondents (Table 4).

Table 5 represents organ of the university responsible for investigating and punishing offenders of library crimes, 74 (70.5%) use university library's disciplinary committee, 69 (65.7%) use university disciplinary committee, while 4 (3.8%) tried their offender in law court.

TABLE 4 Perpetrators of Library Crimes

Perpetrators	Freq.	%
Students	101	96.2
Academic staff	10	9.5
Non-academic staff	7	6.7
External users from other library of institution	11	10.5
Library security staff (porter)	04	3.8

TABLE 5 Organ Responsible for Punishment of Offenders

Disciplinary Organ	Freq.	%
University library's disciplinary committee	74	70.5
Trial in law court	4	3.8
University disciplinary committee	69	65.7

On the disciplinary measure taken against offenders perpetrating library crime, respondents were asked about the types of punishments for library offenders. Punishments included reprimand, 45 (42.9%); temporary suspension from library had 73 (69.5%); withdrawal of the right to borrow library materials, 61 (58.1%); suspension from the university, 53 (50.0%); rustication from the university, 30 (28.6%); expulsion from the university, 22 (21.0%); and termination of appointment if the person is a library staff member, 43 (41.0%) (Table 6).

To guarantee safety of library resources according to respondents, security measures were put in place by their libraries. Employment of library security staff/porter—87 (82.9%)—was rated highest among security measures put in place by university libraries. This was followed by education and of library staff on security issues, 63 (60%); security outreach programs/workshops, seminars, conferences) for library staff and users had 50 (47.6%) responses; library security committee, 44(41.9%); installation of closed-circuit television, 45 (42.9%); library security policy, 41(39.0); installation of crime detection gadget in strategic places in the library, 33 (31.4%); and constitution of library security intelligence committee had 14 (13.3%) responses (Table 7).

Table 7 represents opinions of respondents on the causes of crimes in the university libraries, according to the respondents: lack of education and training for library users on library crime, 74 (70.5%); inefficient security system to track offenders, 71(67.6%); lack of awareness on library rules and regulation on library crime by users, 64 (61%); harsh economic condition that makes it difficult for users to buy books, 63 (60%); and lack of adequate punishment to serve as deterrent to others, 61 (58.1%) were the major reasons for library crimes in the library studied. The least commonly stated cause of

TABLE 6 Disciplinary Measure for Offenders of Library Crimes

Punishment	Freq.	%
Reprimand	45	42.9
Temporary suspension from the library	73	69.5
Withdrawal of the right to borrow library materials	61	58.1
Suspension from the university	53	50.5
Rustication from the university	80	2.6
Expulsion from the university	22	21.0
Termination of appointment if the person is a staff member	43	41.0

TABLE 7 Security Measures in University Libraries

Security Measures	Freq.	%
Library security committee	44	41.9
Employment of library security staff/porter	87	82.9
Installation of closed-circuit television	45	42.9
Library security policy	41	39
Education and training of staff on security issues	63	60
Installation of crime detection devices in strategic places in the library	33	31.4
Constitution of library intelligent committee	14	13.3
Security outreach programs (workshops, seminars, and conferences) for library staff and users	50	47.6

library crime is the work of the devil, 14 (13.3%). This is followed by the belief that some perpetrators of the crime are psychologically disordered, 27(25.7%)

Analysis of data collected through interviews conducted with librarians and library officers working in selected university libraries revealed that university libraries were confronted with many security challenges. According to responses from interviewees, noise making through making and receiving telephone calls by staff and library users constituted the most frequently encountered offense committed in the library. This is followed by theft and mutilation of library materials. A majority of the respondents confirmed that their library had recorded one case of theft and mutilation in their library. A head of a library confirmed how a set of a new edition of the McGraw-Hill *Encyclopedia of Science and Technology* was stolen and that efforts to find it were not successful. Thefts of personal belonging of library users are also a common occurrence according to the respondents; a respondent cited an instance when three laptop computers belonging to readers were stolen from the cloakroom in their library within a week.

Non-return of borrowed books is another crime against libraries reported by respondents. These crimes according to them are perpetrated by all cadres of library users including senior professors.

DISCUSSION

Results of the data analysis establish the fact that university libraries in Southwest Nigeria are confronted with various crime and security challenges. Prominent among these challenges were theft, mutilation and defacement of library materials, and hiding of books to prevent other users from having access This confirms the findings of Senyah (2004); Akinfolarin (1992); Ewing (1994); Adewale (2007); and Akussah and Bentil (2010) that theft and

TABLE 8 Causes of Library Crime and Material Abuse in University Libraries

Causes	Freq.	%
Lack of awareness of library rules and regulations by users	64	61.0
Lack of education on library crime for library users	74	70.5
Lack of photocopying/reprographic quality in the library	42	40.0
Harsh economic condition that makes it difficult for users to buy books	63	60
The work of the devil	14	13.5
Deliberate and malicious damage by users	55	52.2
Some perpetrators are psychologically disordered	27	25.7
Most offenders are evil-minded	45	42.9
Exorbitant price of most of the materials that have made them unaffordable for users	52	49.5
Inefficient security system to track offenders	71	67.6
Lack of adequate punishment to serve as deterrent to others	61	58.1
In most cases, library has limited copies of the materials that are prone to stealing and mutilation.	58	55.2
Lack of awareness by library staff about the impact of crime on the library services	39	37.1

mutilation of library material are the crimes most reported in libraries. Theft and mutilation can be attributed to factors like lack of education and training of library users on library crime; harsh economic situations that make it difficult for users to buy books; inefficient security systems; and limited copies of materials of high demand as revealed in the study (Table 8). Also, noise is another anti-library act perpetrated by library users as revealed in this study; this also corroborates Ntui's (2009) finding at the University of Calabar that noise become a disturbing factor and has a negative effect on library operation.

Analysis of data on library materials' susceptibility to abuse revealed that textbooks, serial publications such as scientific journals, and references are the materials highly susceptible to abuse by library users. This corroborates findings of Senyah (2004) and Akussah and Bentil (2010) that textbooks and reference materials are most susceptible to abuse by library users. Factors that may contribute to the abuse of these information resources include that in the first instance, they are the materials most consulted by users. Second, materials like reference materials and serials are not circulated, and this restricts users' access to them. Lack of photocopying services in the libraries could also encourage this act.

The study also revealed that though other library users were involved in library crime, students were in most cases the culprits. This corroborated Senyah's (2004) finding that students were the most frequent perpetrators of library crimes in academic libraries.

Ineffective security systems as reported in the studies of Ewing (1994); Ajayi and Omotayo (2006); Adewale (2007); and Adewuyi and Adekanye

(2011) also featured prominently in the findings of this study. Ineffective security may result from recruitment of security personnel who commonly lack adequate skills or prior training and experience in security issues. Also, it may be due to unavailability of periodic training on library-related crimes for library security personnel.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Library crime and security challenges are phenomena that are recorded by libraries all over the world, crossing all cultural, racial, and geographical divides. The situation is more pronounced in university libraries in Africa because of the poor economic conditions that greatly reduced users' purchasing power and are also causes of substantially increased student enrolments. University libraries will continue to face security challenges as they open their doors to users of different backgrounds and orientations. Unless some urgent measures are taken, university libraries will continue to live with theft and mutilation of library resources, defacement of library books, late return of borrowed material, noise, and other challenges.

In order to reduce library crime and its adverse effects on library operations and services, we believe it is imperative that the following recommendations be enacted by university libraries:

1. Adequate and effective security system should be put in place through recruitment of well-trained library security personnel who understand special library security challenges and how to address them. Training and re-training are also necessary to update their knowledge about new security methods and techniques.
2. Photocopying services should be made available in order to allow users to photocopy those materials that do not circulate such as reference materials, serials, and special publications.
3. Multiple copies of books in high demand should always be purchased to make the material more available and thus guard against loss of scarce texts, which loss would then disrupt the studies of other users and initiate a vicious cycle of theft.
4. Education and training for library staff and users on the effects of library crime and material abuse should be periodically organized so as to enlighten them on the need to desist from acts that can impede library and university operations.
5. Tough punishments should be meted out to perpetrators of the library crimes. This will serve as a deterrent to prospective perpetrators.
6. Criminal detection system should be installed in the libraries to detect and arrest criminals.

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