

## ASSESSMENT OF DELINQUENT BEHAVIOURS OF LIBRARY USERS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN IMO AND ANAMBRA STATES

**Linda I. Anyalebechi**

*Medical Library, College of Medicine, Amaku, Awka, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University*

Email: [lindaanyalebechi@yahoo.com](mailto:lindaanyalebechi@yahoo.com)

**Adaora J. Udo-Anyanwu**

*Department of Library and Information Science, Imo State University, Owerri.*

Email: [adaoraudoanyanwu@yahoo.com](mailto:adaoraudoanyanwu@yahoo.com)

**Ifunanya V. Ubochi**

*Library Division, Federal Polytechnic Nekede*

Email: [ginafrank14@yahoo.com](mailto:ginafrank14@yahoo.com)

### Abstract

*This research paper assessed delinquent behaviours of library users in tertiary institutions in Anambra and Imo states with reference to Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Anambra State and Federal Polytechnic Nekede, Owerri, Imo State. The study was guided by five research questions. Survey method was employed while the 78 staff of the libraries constituted the population of the study. Questionnaire structured with 4-point rating scale was the instrument for data collection. Mean rating was used for data analyses using 2.50 as the acceptance score. The paper identified the prevalent delinquent behaviours as book theft and mutilation, noise making, hiding of library materials, answering and making phone calls, holding of borrowed books beyond their due date, sleeping in the library and stealing of personal belongings of staff and users. The causes of delinquent behaviours of the library users are inadequate user education, selfishness of students, inadequacy of heavily used information resources and security lapses. Delinquent behaviours lead to depletion/damage of library resources, ineffective services etc; these behaviours have effect on library resources and services to a very high extent. Strategies to be adopted to curb delinquent behaviours of library users are installation of Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV), permanent library security personnel, provision of multiple copies of heavily used information resources among others.*

### Introduction

Academic libraries are integral and indispensable part of any academic institution. They support the teaching, learning and research needs of academic institutions they serve. The focus of any academic library is to collect, organise, preserve and provide access to knowledge and information. These libraries provide students with access to knowledge and information they need to do their assignments, projects and read textbooks that are relevant to their classroom experiences, to learn skills in locating sources of information and to develop good reading and

study habits. Libraries enhance the conduct of research thus fulfilling one of the fundamental objectives of an academic institution. Libraries play a very important role in promoting the progress of knowledge to users and particularly for poor users who cannot afford the cost of purchasing books.

Like any human establishment, there are rules and regulations guiding the use of the library irrespective of the type. Users are expected to observe these rules and regulations when they are making use of the library resources and services. This makes it important for readers to be familiar with these rules to avoid falling victim or violate any of them. Hisle (2002) asserts that regulations are to guide users' conducts as well as the use of library materials. Academic libraries all over the world formulate library rules and regulations aimed at regulating the conduct of library users and checking library book mutilations and thefts. According to Alokun (2004) "readers are required to be well behaved in the library". It is not surprising to note that most library users are not aware that the non-observance of the library regulations amounts to delinquent behaviours.

In a library environment, violating the rules and regulations of the library is usually said to be an act of delinquency liable to penalties set by the authorities. User delinquencies according to Ebunuwele (2011) are actions that are illegal or immoral that users carry out during the process of consulting library books and other materials. User delinquency may include; pilfering, defacing or mutilation of pages, pictures, diagrams, tables, eating food items, noise making, mishandling of library materials, holding borrowed books beyond their due date and displaying unruly behaviour. These acts have been termed by many researchers such as Esievo (2007) as delinquent acts, Ebunuwele (2011) as user delinquency, Ogbonyomi (2011) as crimes and Oyesiku et al (2012) as disruptive readers. All these can have adverse effects on the use and growth of libraries.

According to Jato (2005), scandalous behaviours such as theft and mutilation, hiding library materials, refusal to return overdue borrowed materials, among others have become a common occurrence in academic libraries. If this is not checked, it will lead to a serious drought of information materials in the library. With emphasis to the relevance of books and other information materials to our academic environment, book abuse in the form of theft, mutilation, hiding of books, vandalism and other acts of violation of library rules and regulations should not be left unaddressed. The menace of these delinquent behaviours in the libraries hinders the growth of the library collections and leads to ineffective service delivery which in turn affects the level of satisfaction derived by the library users.

Libraries adopt various measures to ensure that library users behave well when using the library such as; restriction of entry into the library with briefcases, bags, regular patrol by library staff, checking of patrons going out at the exit etc. In developing nations such as Nigeria, there are inadequate security measures which give users the opportunity to perform such immoral acts. Use of electronic gadgets is not common due to the cost implication.

It is against this background that the researchers carried out this study on assessment of delinquent behaviours of library users of Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Anambra State and Federal Polytechnic Nekede, Owerri, Imo State.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions that guided this study are:

- i. What are the delinquent behaviours prevalent in libraries in Anambra and Imo States?
- ii. What are the causes of these delinquent behaviours?
- iii. What are the effects of these delinquent behaviours on library resources and services?
- iv. To what extent do these delinquent behaviours affect library resources and services?
- v. What are the strategies adopted to curb delinquent behaviours of library users?

## **Literature Review**

Atmospheres where rules and regulations are flouted do not guarantee safety. Security to Okere (2006) is the absence of crime. He went further and asserted that the true test of good security is when all goes well, lives are safe, burglaries prevented, robberies foiled and frauds prevented. To Nwosu (2000), book theft, mutilation, book defacement, noisemaking, assault, seat reservation, vandalism, stealing of library resources and personal belongings of staff and patrons are offences people commit in the library. Delinquency is endemic in the society hence every sector is vulnerable the library inclusive.

The incidence and control of delinquent behaviours in academic libraries is of serious concern to librarians. Nina-Okpousung (2011) recommends that the library management should ensure that every academic year, libraries offer series of library orientation courses on library use, rules and users' conduct. This helps to check the level at which users violate library regulations as well as educate patrons on the use of libraries. Sule (2001) and, Attamah and Ezema (2002) reported some years back that there is some relationship between library use instruction and the extent of library misuse practices and vandalism. They also noted that library education also helps in reducing activities of delinquent readers. Lowry and Groetsch (2001) highlighted the importance of creating shared culture of mutual responsibility for security and safety of library collection. This involves making clear to users and staff about the safety and security policies and guidelines in libraries, especially those regarding food consumption in the library, theft, mutilation and disruptive behaviours. They also emphasized on policies regarding training of staff to create an awareness culture.

Ifidon and Ifidon (2007) traced the origin of theft and mutilation back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century when books were chained so that they could not be illegally removed, when night watchmen and grills were as much management issues in medieval time as they are today. They maintained that there is no doubt that theft and mutilation of library materials, including machine-readable materials account for the largest number of crimes and security problems.

Various things affect students' observance of regulations. Dare (1989) observed that harsh economic situation on students is essentially responsible for such anti-social behaviours in our tertiary institutions. Some students may be poor, books and other reading materials are beyond the reach of the teeming population. Abdullahi and Dawha (2006) do not consent to the idea that poverty on the part of the students is a necessary fact that could induce theft of library materials. They observed in a recent survey on users' opinion on mutilation and book theft that some library users steal library materials not because they are poor, ignorant about the rules and regulations governing the services of the library but rather, they just feel like doing it because it is pathological to them. To this category of users, stealing and deviant behaviour could possibly be seen as way of life, part of their inborn characteristics that require education and possible grace of God for them to have a change of heart. Bello (2001) in his study discovered that some causes of library malpractices were lack of enough security and inadequate number of books in the library. McKnight (2005) carried out a study on causes of noise in libraries. From his study, he noted that library staff influence users disregard for library regulations. He observed that users will observe silence within the library, if library staff live by example.

Attamah and Ezema (2007) noted that the cause of book loss and lifting of pages of library books is mainly as a result of demand outstripping supply of reading materials. Such delinquent behaviours may be curbed by acquisition of multiple copies of library materials. Oni (1984) maintained that insufficient multiple copies could prompt readers to steal library books. This could therefore be rightly translated to mean that the more books are available in the library, the less the

temptation to steal library books. Many academic libraries in Nigeria have not been able to acquire collections comprehensive enough to meet the needs of their users due to inadequate fund. Omoniyi (2002) further observed that some important factors that prevent libraries from purchasing adequate numbers of books are economic problems and monetary allocations which have over the years, been drastically reduced in some universities while some other universities are not given any.

The length of time that libraries open determines the usage of the library materials and thus indirectly determines the degree of observance of library regulations. It therefore follows that a user may mutilate as well as steal library materials because opening hours of the library are not convenient. Hansson (2000) noted that the imposition of short operating hours influence users to steal and mutilate materials which hurts users of the library, many of whom are researchers and students. According to Aguolu and Aguolu (2002), "typical library hours are unsatisfactory, because libraries are heavily used at evenings and weekends by students". This, they noted, is one of the reasons why users resort to holding on to library materials, and thus not observing policies of prompt return of library resources.

The library is experiencing adverse effects as a result of delinquent behaviours of the users. Supporting this, Nduka (2005:10) identified the effects of book theft and mutilation to include the following:

- i. Reduction of library stock
- ii. Reduces the lifespan of the mutilated materials
- iii. Leads to extra cost, time and personal needed to replace the stolen and mutilated materials.
- iv. It prevents students from locating needed materials
- v. It leads to frustration among users and;
- vi. It leads to poor performance of the students in examination.

Libraries devise disciplinary measures to deter students from non-observance or punish students who default. These disciplinary measures include payment of fines, replacement of the information materials or double pay for lost books, withdrawal of library card, seizure of phones and food items. Obokoh (1996) identified various disciplinary strategies used to curb the incidents of material theft and mutilation. He stated that there is need to have regulations to guard against user delinquency. One such regulation is having users sign a form when they arrive stating that they will not engage in delinquent activities and they will bear the consequences if caught committing such acts.

To safeguard library collections, Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) suggested that many devices should be employed such as the use of guards and surveillance. Abifarin (1997), Allen (1997) and Bello (1998) suggested measures to reduce security problems, which include tightening security at library entrances and exit, expulsion of students involved in theft and mutilation, provision of multiple copies of heavily used text, reducing the cost of photocopying and periodic searching of students' hostels and staff offices. An automated security system such as Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) serves three main purposes. First, the mere presence of a system can act as a deterrent to crime. Second, if an intrusion occurs, it will be detected. Finally, the system will notify appropriate personnel making apprehension of the intruder possible. It is the view of Karunanayake (2003) that the library building should be designed to reduce any kind of delinquencies in libraries. He suggested that hazards such as theft, vandalism and mutilation, delinquencies could be completely avoided by proper building arrangements by using closed accessed shelves, exit control, cloakrooms and visible reading arrangements. Small grills must cover the windows so those books cannot be thrown out.

Nwalo (2003) argued that library crime may not be prevented or checked to its minimal state as long as the security personnel are not directly under the library department. He stated that the security men are loyal to the security department rather than the library authority. This situation makes it difficult for the librarians to control security matters in their library as their orders may be flouted. Brown and Patkus (2004) further stated that if collections are to be protected against loss, libraries and archives must consider security as a management issue deserving a serious investment of resources.

### **Methodology**

The survey method was used for this study and the questionnaire was the instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was structured using 4-point rating scale. Mean rating was used for data analyses and 2.50 was the cut off mark for acceptance, this means that scores that are equal to and above 2.50 will be accepted while those below it will not be accepted.. The 78 library staff of the two libraries - Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University library Anambra State and Federal Polytechnic library Nekede, Owerri, Imo State - studied constituted the population of the study.

### **Data Analyses, Interpretation and Discussion**

**Key: A = Agree D = Disagree**

**Table 1: Delinquent behaviours prevalent in the libraries.**

<b>S/n</b>	<b>Question Items</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Decision</b>
1	Book theft and mutilation	3.57	A
2	Noise making	2.54	A
3	Hiding of library materials	2.56	A
4	Answering and making phone calls	3.23	A
5	Eating food items	2.42	D
6	Holding borrowed books beyond their due date	2.64	A
7	Refusal to return overdue borrowed materials	2.32	D
8	Assault to library staff	2.44	D
9.	Seat reservation	2.42	D
10.	Sleeping in the library	2.54	A
11.	Vandalism	2.41	D
12.	Stealing of personal belongings of staff and users	2.51	A

Analysis of data in table 1 reveals that the delinquent behaviours prevalent in the libraries studied are book theft and mutilation, noise making, hiding of library materials, answering of phone calls, holding of borrowed books beyond due date, sleeping in the library and stealing of personal belongings of staff and users with mean scores of 3.57, 2.54, 2.56, 3.23, 2.64, 2.54 and 2.51 respectively.

This implies that delinquent behaviours are exhibited in the libraries studied but a closer look at the mean scores reveals that book theft and mutilation are the most prevalent with a mean score of 3.57. This finding is in agreement with Ifidon and Ifidon (2007) who maintained that there is no doubt that theft and mutilation of library materials, including machine-readable materials account for the largest number of crimes and security problems.

**Table 2: Causes of delinquent behaviours**

S/n	Question Items	Mean	Decision
1	Students are not given adequate user education.	2.82	A
2	Selfishness of students.	3.39	A
3	Inadequacy of heavily used information resources.	2.70	A
4	Financial constraints.	2.33	D
5	Unavailability of reprographic services.	2.38	D
6	Inadequate loan period.	1.93	D
7	Security lapses.	3.24	A
8	Students' dissatisfaction with library services.	1.79	D
9.	Attitude of staff to rules and regulations	2.52	A
10.	Insufficient library hours	2.17	D
11.	Poor architectural design of the library building	1.56	D

Analysis from Table 2 shows that question items 1, 2, 3, 7 and 9 were accepted as causes of delinquent behaviours of the library users. This can be seen from their scores of above 2.50 cut off mark. This means that these behaviours are triggered off by some certain factors.

This finding corroborates with that of some authors such as Bello (2001) who discovered that some causes of library malpractices were lack of enough security and inadequate number of books in the library and McKnight (2005) who noted that library staff influence users disregard for library regulations. He observed that users will observe silence within the library, if library staff live by example. However, the finding does not agree with that of Nina-Okpousung (2011) and Hansson (2000) who stated that users may mutilate as well as steal library materials because opening hours of the library are not convenient.

**Table 3: Effects of delinquent behaviours on library resources and services.**

S/n	Question Items	Mean	Decision
1.	Depletion of library resources.	3.15	A
2.	Damages to information resources.	3.30	A
3.	Leads to lack of confidence and reduces library patronage.	3.18	A
4.	Ineffective services	2.67	A
5.	Extra cost and time needed to replace stolen and mutilated materials	2.76	A
6.	Flouting of library rules and regulations	2.61	A

All the question items were accepted as effects of delinquent behaviours on library resources and services with mean scores above the 2.50 cut off mark. This implies that delinquent behaviours of library users have negative effect on effective service delivery.

This finding is in agreement with the statement of Jato (2005) that scandalous behaviours such as theft and mutilation, hiding library materials, refusal to return overdue borrowed materials, among others have become a common occurrence in academic libraries and if not checked, will lead to a serious drought of information materials in the library and that of Nduka (2005) who identified the effects of book theft and mutilation to include the following: reduction of library stock, extra cost, time and personal needed to replace the stolen and mutilated materials.

**Table 4: Extent to which delinquent behaviours affect library resources and services**

S/n	Question Items	Mean	Decision
1.	Very High Extent	3.42	A
2.	High Extent	2.27	D
3.	Low Extent	2.21	D
4.	Very Low Extent	1.33	D

From Table 4, there is indication that delinquent behaviours of students affect library resources and services to a very high extent with a mean score of 3.42. This implies that every aspect of library resources and services are affected and this will definitely lead to poor service delivery.

This finding is in tandem with that of Ozioko and Ogwo (2014) that delinquent acts affected the services of the college libraries studied to a great extent.

**Table 5: Strategies to be adopted to curb delinquent behaviours of library users**

S/n	Question Items	Mean	Decision
1.	Installation of Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV).	3.42	A
2.	Permanent library security personnel.	3.27	A
3.	Provision of multiple copies of information resources.	3.21	A
4.	Teaching of user education/use of the library course by library staff.	3.33	A
5.	Provision of reprographic services.	3.24	A
6.	Gauzing of library windows.	2.45	D
7.	Extension of loan periods/operating hours.	1.21	D
8.	Observation of library regulations by staff also	2.54	A
9.	Disciplinary measures for delinquent behaviours	3.57	A

All the question items with exception of 6 and 7 were accepted as strategies to be adopted to curb delinquent behaviours of library users. This indicates that all hope is not lost on the issue of delinquent behaviours since there is a way out.

The acceptance of installation of CCTV by the respondents is in line with the suggestion of Karunanayake (2003) and Ebunuwele (2011), having permanent library security agrees with Nwalo (2003) who argued that library crime may not be prevented or checked to its minimal state as long as the security personnel are not directly under the library department; Obokoh (1996) on disciplinary measures; Nina-Okpousung (2011) on user education; Omoniyi (2002) on provision of multiple copies of information resources and others.

### **Conclusion**

From this study on assessment of delinquent behaviours of library users in tertiary institutions in Imo and Anambra states, it was discovered that students disregard the rules and regulations of the library leading to acts of delinquency which have certain effects on the provision of library services. Although some reasons have been attributed to these delinquent behaviours respondents still believe that there are strategies which can help to curb delinquent behaviours of library users.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers make the following recommendations:

- Students should be given adequate orientation through user education/use of the library course emphasizing the importance of the library, library services and operations, rules and

regulations of the library as well as penalties for offenders. They should also be encouraged to apply ownership spirit when using the library and to consider other library users. In doing this, qualified library staff should be involved.

- Multiple copies of heavily used information resources should be acquired. Information resources can be photocopied and bound to serve as alternative.
- Permanent library security personnel are advocated. This is because they will be more conversant with library operations/services and can identify library books easily. Also library staff can undergo training on simple security methods.
- Disciplinary measures should be strictly adhered to, to serve as deterrent to others who may have intention of indulging in the act.
- The library staff should also observe the library regulations. They should not be answering calls in the reading halls or chatting loudly with other staff or their visitors.
- The Close-Circuit Television (CCTV) is advocated for use in these libraries. This is essential because it covers areas where ordinary eyes may not reach. It helps in the apprehension of offenders. Also the mere knowledge of the availability of CCTV in the library will discourage students from indulging in the act.
- Amnesty can be granted to students with overdue borrowed materials so that they can return it without any disciplinary action meted on them.

## **References**

- Abdullahi, H. B. & Dawha, E. M. K. (2006). Opinion survey of users on mutilation and book theft in selected college libraries. *African Journal of Education and Information Management*, 8 (2). pp 1-3.
- Abifarin, A. (1997). Library stock security: The experience of the University of Agriculture Abeokuta, Nigeria. *Library and Archival Security*, 14 (1). 11-19.
- Aguolu, C. C. & Aguolu, I.E. (2002). *Libraries and information management in Nigeria: Seminal essays on themes and problems*. Maiduguri: Ed-Linform Services.
- Allen, S. M. (1997). Preventing theft in academic libraries and special collections. *Library and Archival Security*, 14 (1). 29-43.
- Alokun, N. A. (2004). *The use of library: A textbook for students in tertiary institutions*. Lagos: Nudex International Co. ltd.
- Attamah, O. R. & Ezema, I. J. (2002). *Library and information services: A practical approach*. Enugu: Mikon Press.
- Bello, M. A. (1998). Library security, material theft and mutilation in technological university libraries in Nigeria. *Library Management*, 19 (6). 379-383.
- Bello, S. A. (2001). Library user malpractice: A case study of Ibadan Polytechnic Library. *Nigerian Libraries*, 35 (1). 23-32.
- Brown, K. E. & Patkus, B. L. (2004). Collections security: Planning and prevention for libraries and archives. [http://www.nedcc.org/resources/leaflets/3Emergency\\_Managment/11...](http://www.nedcc.org/resources/leaflets/3Emergency_Managment/11...)
- Dare, M. (1989). The study of causes of students' unrest in higher institutions. In I. Mbagwu & I. G. Iwuanyanwu (2013). Mutilation and theft of library resources in the Imo State University Library, Owerri, Imo State. *Nigerian Library and Information Science Trends*, 6 (1&2). pp 90-100.
- Ebunuwele, G.E; Yaya, J. & Krubu, D.E (2011). User delinquency in Nigerian academic libraries: An empirical perspective. *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)* <http://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/~mbolin/ebunuwele-yaya-krubu.htm>

- Esievo, L. O. (2007). Measures to curb delinquent acts in academic libraries in Kaduna State. *Continental Journal of Information Technology* 1. 35-43. <http://wiloludjournal.academia.edu/FrancisOlawaleAbulude/Papers/6...>
- Hansson, M. (2000). State library staff's principle stand. *The Guardian*, July 26<sup>th</sup>.
- Hisle, L. (2002). Top issues facing academic libraries: A report on the future taskforce. *Association of College and Research Libraries Journal*, 63 (10). 67-89.
- Ifidon, S. E. & Ifidon, E. I. (2007). *New directions in African library management*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books limited.
- Jato, M. (2005). Causes and effects of delinquent behaviour in academic libraries (Kenneth Dike Library as a case study). *Owena Journal of Library and Information Science*, 2 (1). 25-34.
- Karunanayake, K. G. (2003). Library architecture: Interior security measures as a protective coverage for a library: A study of three university libraries. *Journal of the University Librarians Association of Sri Lanka*, (7). 32-43.
- Lowry, C. B. and Groetsch, L. (2001). Creating a culture of security in University of Maryland library. In A. A. Maidabino & A. N. Zainab (2011). Collection security management at university libraries: Assessment of its implementation status. *Malaysian Journal of Library and Information Science*, 16 (1). 15-33.
- McKnight, S.(2005). Involving the customer in library planning and decision making. <http://www.nothinghamtrendniversity.ac.uk>
- Nduka, F. C. (2005). The determinants of academic library materials acquisition: A case study of polytechnic libraries. Master's thesis, Imo State University, Owerri.
- Nina-Okpousung, M. O. (April, 2011). Library policies and overdue materials in Delta State Polytechnic Libraries, Nigeria. *Journal of Research in Education and Society (Online edition)*, 2 (1).
- Nwalo, K. N (2002). *Fundamentals of library practice: A manual on library routines*. Lagos: Stirling-Horden Publishers.
- Nwosu, C. (2000). *A textbook in use of library for higher education*. Owerri: Springfield.
- Obokoh, N. P. (1996). Patterns of disciplinary strategies used in dealing with cases of book/journal theft/mutilation in Nigerian university libraries. *Library Bulletin: Nigerian University Library System*, 1 (2). 50-57.
- Ogbonyomi, A. L. (2011). Security and crime prevention in academic libraries: A case study of Kano State College of Education, Kano, Nigeria. *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)* <http://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/~mbolin/ogbonyomi.htm>.
- Okere, U. (2006). Security a collective responsibility of everyone in society. In B. O. Edom (2010). The security of school library resources for the sustenance of Universal Basic Education programme in Nigeria. *Madonna University Journal of Research in Library and Information Science*, 1 (1).
- Omoniyi, J. O. (2001). The security of computer and other electronic installations in university libraries. *Library Management*, 22 (6&&). 272-277.
- Oni, J. A. (1984). Book theft in libraries: Problems and solutions. *Lagos Librarian*, 11 (1&2). 97-99.
- Oyesiku, F. A, Buraimo, O & Olusanya, O. F (2012). Disruptive readers in academic libraries: A study of Olabisi Onabanjo University Library. *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)* <http://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/~mbolin/oyesiku-buraimo-olusany.htm>.
- Ozioko, R. E. & Ogwo, U. (2014). Delinquent Readership Problems in Libraries in Colleges of Education in Enugu and Ebonyi States. *Indian Journal of Applied Research*, 4 (4). 265-268.

Sule, N. N. (2001). Students' use of selected services in Kogi State Polytechnic library Lokoja, Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Technical Education*, 18 (1). 18-25.