

## **Theft And Vandalism: Effect And Control Mechanism On Information Resources In Academic Libraries In Osun State, Nigeria.**

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**Abstract:** This study examined the effects of theft and vandalism of library information resources and its control mechanisms in selected academic libraries in Osun state, Nigeria. The survey research methodology was adopted and the population was two hundred and forty (240) library staff. The total enumeration technique was employed in the study; one hundred and forty-two (142) sample size used was based on the available staff on ground as at the time of administration of the questionnaire. This was as a result of the fact that some of the staff members were on leave, some on sabbatical and some were on shift duties. The instrument used was questionnaire. A response rate of 100% was recorded. Data collected were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages and tables. The findings revealed that the extent of theft and vandalism of library materials were high in academic libraries in Osun state, Nigeria and this was associated with economic depression, lack of user orientation etc. The findings also revealed that the resources that were majorly affected are reference materials as well as books containing disc etc. The study found out some methods used to perpetrate the act of theft and vandalism of library resources, this include; mutilation of books, walking out with library materials when security is not alert etc. The study concluded that theft and vandalism of information resources has affected the academic library in no small measure. It was therefore; recommended that there should be policy formulation that will guide against every form of theft and vandalism.

**Keywords:** *Theft, Vandalism, Information Resources, Academic library.*

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Academic libraries are libraries that are attached to academic institutions above secondary school level, serving the teaching and research needs of students, staff and the community. The library serves two complementary purposes: to support the school's curriculum and to support the research needs of the students. Okiy (2014), observed that libraries that exist in institutions of higher education such as universities, colleges of education, colleges of technology and polytechnics are all academic libraries. Academic library is an integral part of institution of higher learning and met the information needs of its community. Academic libraries are the 'heart' of the learning community, empowering students and faculty to learn, do research and advance the frontiers of knowledge. The institutions advance the knowledge of the citizenry through their libraries with the help of the collections that are the bedrock for the services provided to the users.

Aina,(2004) stated that the main purpose of university library is to support the objectives of the university in the area of learning, teaching, research and community service. Therefore, it is the responsibilities of the librarian to ensure that the use of its information sources and services are maximized to benefit users. An academic library is a subsystem of the institution and it serves the research needs of the researcher. It has become an important unit of university or college information infrastructure and an active participant in the teaching-learning process of the particular study programme, academic library is characterized by the abundance of information sources and services that cuts across all the existing disciplines in the university or college as the case may be.

Academic library has basic characteristics which are to totally identify with its institution because the measure of its excellence is determined by the extent to which its resources and services support the academic

pursuit of the institution. A well-stocked, adequately staffed and well organized library is definitely the hall mark or sine qua non of a modern educational system because education without a library is tantamount to staging the famous Shakespearian play HAMLET without the prince of Denmark. Academic libraries play a critical role in national development because they are reflective of our cultural metamorphosis and maturation, and also a response to the total communication pattern of modern society. Academic library exist mainly to contribute to the realization of their institution goals and objectives.

However, as a result of this diverse use of information materials in the academic library, users tends to constitute nuisance through their destructive behaviour of mutilating, stealing and vandalizing of library resources for their selfish gain. Therefore, one major challenge that academic libraries have been faced with is security problems, that is, how to secure their collections. Mullen and Gaumond, (2009) pointed out that people prefer to stay where they are, if the place is safe and secure. Therefore, for academic libraries to achieve their aim of information dissemination, there must be proper security management of library collections against theft, mutilation, deterioration and natural disaster which are threats to academic libraries.

The library is referred “the only centralized location where new and emerging information technologies can be combined with knowledge resources in a user-focused, services-rich environment that supports today’s social and educational patterns of learning, teaching and research”. Library services can only be achieved through the availability of library collections. (Gelfand, 2005; Maidabino, 2010).

Anunobi and Okoye (2008) stated that, “academic libraries are faced with hybrid challenges of managing resources and are challenged to acquire the necessary skills”. One challenge is the issue of disruptive behavior for print and non-print resources. Oyewusi and Oyeboade (2009) discussed the importance of access to collections in supporting the mission of the university. The researchers view the importance of good collections as a pointer to the need for safety and security for those collections.

More so, scandalous behaviour such as theft and mutilation, hiding library materials, refuse to return overdue borrowed materials, drinking and eating in the library, among others have become a common occurrence in academic library, if this is not checked, it will lead to serious drought of information materials in the library. Most of the academic libraries in the developing nations including Nigeria lack security measures which encourage users to perform such act. Aside this, library materials are not available in large quantity in some libraries and most libraries do not have photocopy facilities for users in case of any need. In some cases, when available, incessant change in power supply does not give room for users to make copies of urgent materials needed. Academic libraries have been faced with varying degrees of criminal behaviour in the use of their resources especially materials and to some extent manpower. These among others tempt the users to engage in such disruptive act. The extent of this problem varies from one library to another. In some cases, the dimension of the problem is so restricted that it seems non-existent; in some others the dimension is so immense that it causes serious concern.

## **II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The importance of information resources cannot be over-emphasized as users depend on library resources for knowledge and new ideas to enhance intellectual development. As a result, libraries faced varying degree of delinquencies in the use of their resources and the extent of these problems varies from one library to another. Among these problems are theft and vandalism. Theft and vandalism have become major security problems and threat that confront and affect library development. The effective use of library materials is hindered by this menace, these problems has resulted into loss of many information and other valuable materials in the library and has affected the quality of research as researchers are denied access to some important and relevant materials needed which must have been catered away by users. Researchers are also psychologically frustrated and disappointed when their visit to the library yields little or no result. Hence, this study is carried out to assess the effects of theft and vandalism of information resources and proffer some possible mechanisms to curb the menace in selected academic libraries in Osun State, Nigeria.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This study sought answers to the following research questions:

1. To what extent has theft and vandalism affected information resources in academic libraries in Osun State?
2. What are the information resources that are vulnerable to theft and vandalism in academic libraries in Osun State?
3. What are the main factors that are responsible for theft and vandalism of information resources in academic libraries in Osun State?
4. What are the effects of theft and vandalism of information resources on library and users in academic libraries in Osun State?

### III. LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of theft and vandalism can be viewed as a composite term. The term theft is an illegal way of removing or taking out library materials without the knowledge of librarians or supportive staff. While vandalism is the unlawful tearing, cutting off of necessary part or damaging of library materials which could affect the effective use of the material. The issues of theft and vandalism have generated lots of seminars, workshops and articles (Ugah, 2007; Ogbonyomi, and Jato, 2005; and Anuobi and Okoye 2008).

Theft and mutilation of information resources, assault on staff are serious security issues that need urgent attention (Ifidon, 2000). The threat to intellectual property through theft, mutilation and other forms of abuse has posed tremendous challenges to the library profession worldwide (Akussah and Bentil, 2010). With particular reference to electronic resources, Kumar and Haneefa (2005) observed that libraries are lagging behind in realizing the need to protect their electronic resources and services from misuse, damage, theft, sabotage, mistakes and many more. It is true that we can never completely protect our library network from the unauthorized users but the attack can be minimized up to a desired level (Sarmah, 2003).

The types of materials that is vulnerable to theft and vandalism in the library to include print and non-print materials, high demand materials such as special collections, rare books and manuscripts (Holt, 2007; Forley, 2005). Forley (2007) stated that books, journals as well as rare books and archives are at risk of theft and vandalism in the library. In the same vein, Ajegbomogun (2004) found that the focus of abuse is predominantly on reference books and journals. Theft and vandalism had made most libraries disorganized as frequently used materials are lifted out of their shelves, deposited on wrong shelve and stolen, the intellectual content are ripped out for selfish purposes by delinquent users of the library and even staff.

Religious materials are also prone to be vandalized for example, in four Indiana University Libraries, work written about Jehovah's Witnesses had their pages slashed and torn. Similar to Curry, Flodin and Matheson's findings, Schuman 1994 has found that popular magazines tend to be frequently targeted than scholarly journals. His follow up study of the mutilation of popular magazines, he found that most mutilation occur within the first three years after their publication. Studies have also shown that unrepaired vandalized materials are more likely to be vandalized again than materials that have not been vandalized (Curry, Flodin, and Matheson, 2000).

The study of Agbola, (2001) and Ajegbomogun (2004) revealed that economic depression and security were the main factors that contributed to theft and vandalism of library materials. Lorenzen enumerated the following as causes of mutilation or vandalism.

- (a) Student's dissatisfaction or unfamiliarity with the library services.
- (b) Lack of knowledge of replacement cost and time
- (c) Lack of concern for the needs of others
- (d) Few students think of library mutilation and theft as a crime.

Abareh, (2001) conducted an exploratory survey of book loss, and damages in Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University (ATBU), Bauchi Nigeria and found that selfishness, non-availability or insufficiency of books, poverty and denial from using books were the main reasons for book theft and mutilation in the libraries. Karunanayake (2003) also carried out a research on three university libraries in Moscow, on library architecture: interior security measures as a protective coverage for a library, the findings showed that the security problems were due to building constructions flaws and readers behaviour. It was recommended that security measures be incorporated at the designing stage of library plan and security of collections be tightening. Furthermore, Salaam and Onifade (2009) studied the perception and attitude of students in relation to vandalism in Nimbe Adedipe library, University of Agriculture Abeokuta, the findings revealed that vandalism of information materials in form of theft, mutilation and hiding of books and journals were regarded as a form of academic self-survival strategy that is hardly frowned at by majority of the respondents, restriction in the use of some materials, number and duration of loans, insufficient number of copies of recommended textbooks and unaffordable cost of personal textbooks, high cost of photocopying as well as peer influence were factors that influence theft and vandalism of library materials.

In the study of Oyesiku, Buraimo and Olusanya (2012) causes of disruptive behaviour among users of Olabisi Onabanjo University library was examined. The findings reveal that limited materials, selfish interest and lack of photocopy facilities aided stealing and unlawful removal of parts of books and other materials. The study of Uzuegbue and Okoro (2012) on research on "an X-ray of security practices in Nigerian university libraries", the findings revealed that the major causes of theft and vandalism in Nigerian university libraries were student's dissatisfaction or unfamiliarity with library services, lack of knowledge of replacement cost and time, lack of concern for the needs of other users, insufficient recommended textbooks. Emojorho (2012) conducted a study on loss of library materials in Delta state university library, Abraka. The results showed that loss of materials had adverse effect on library services, high cost of library materials and deprivation of users from library book loan service caused damage to library materials. Akor (2013) studied the security management from prevention

of theft in Benue state university library, Makurdi, results showed that materials were stolen and mutilated due to inadequate library materials, financial constraints and selfishness on the part of library users.

Jato (2005) identified the effect of delinquent behaviour on the users and the library. According to the study, immoral behaviour among the users resulted to include the following:

- Reduces the library stock
- Reduces the lifespan of the mutilated library materials.
- Prevent students from locating needed materials
- Leads to frustration among users etc.

Security management is one of the measures that can be used to curb theft and vandalism in academic libraries in Nigeria. According to Encyclopedia (1981), cited in Adamu (2006) security refers to devices designed to guard library materials against crime, accident, disasters, fire and attack. Wallace (2008) argued that there should be the use of security theatre in the library to improve the library security. In using library security theatre, the library will put in place various security measures to ensure that the library is properly secured and monitored. Security awareness should be formalized in organization policy and procedures and communicated to every employee who works with information resources (Saffady, 2005). Akussah and Bentil (2010) recommended that library should invest more in electronic resources, which will reduce to a large extent the incidence of users physically handling documentary materials. This will enhance multiple access to library materials with little damage.

Weible (2003) observed that, for libraries missing items to be identified, there must be successful inventory process. Freddie (2003) advocated the use of electromagnetic security system in securing library collections because it is very cost effective. Apart from inventory taking, there are some other steps that can be taken for libraries collection to be monitored.

Agboola (2001), Ajegbomogun (2004) and Akussah (2010) agreed that financial constraints had deprived librarians of the opportunity to acquire adequate number of essential books in high demand thereby exposing the available ones to the risk of theft and mutilation. There should, therefore, be adequate budgetary provision for libraries to enable them meet their basic requirements in order to meet the expectations of their clientele.

Rajendra (2007) opined that the library security should be planned when the library building is constructed wherever possible, through architectural considerations which include the site design and building design.

#### **IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Survey research design was used for this study. A method of sociological investigation that uses question based or statistical surveys was employed to collect information about people's opinion, perception and idea. The target population of the study comprised the entire library staff of Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife and Federal polytechnic Ede Library Osun State. Two hundred and fourteen (214) library staff from the two academic libraries formed the population of the study.

The total enumeration sampling technique was used due to the population size. Out of the total population of two hundred and fourteen (214) library staff from the two libraries selected for this study, but as at the time of this study, only one hundred and forty two (142) library staff comprising of professional, paraprofessional and support staff were of duty due to permission to absent from duty, annual leave and study leave as a result, the available one hundred and forty two (142) library staff formed the sample size of this study. Questionnaire was used to generate data for analysis. The response rate was 100%. The data collected were analyzed using simple percentage and frequency table.

#### **V. DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION**

##### **RESEARCH QUESTION 1:**

##### **To What Extent Has Theft And Vandalism Of Information Resources Affected The Academic Libraries In Osun State**

**Table 1: Extent Of Theft And Vandalism Of Information Resources**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Extent of theft and vandalism of information resources</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1.	High	70	49.3
2.	Moderate	54	38.0
3.	Low	18	12.7
	Total	142	100

Table I considers the extent of damages caused on materials in academic libraries in Osun State by theft and vandalism; also, it shows frequencies and percentages of extent of damage. Result reveals that the extent of theft and vandalism of library material were high (49.3%) while (38.0%) indicated moderate and low extent (12.7%). This implied that the extent of damages caused on materials in academic libraries in Osun State were high.

**Research Question 2:**

**What Are The Information Resources That Are Affected By Theft And Vandalism In Academic Libraries In Osun State?**

**Table 2: Types Of Information Resources Affected By Theft And Vandalism In Academic Libraries In Osun State**

S/N	Items	Agree		Disagree		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1.	Reference materials	94	66.2	48	33.8	142	100
2	Religious materials	66	46.5	76	53.5	142	100
3	Books Containing discs	96	67.6	46	32.4	142	100
4	Graphical materials	94	66.2	48	33.8	142	100
5	Journals	98	69	44	31	142	100
6	Archival Materials	110	77.4	32	22.6	142	100
7	Special Collections	117	82.4	25	17.6	142	100
8	Materials in which class assignments are given	104	73.2	38	26.8	142	100

Table 2 captures the types of materials affected by theft and vandalism in academic libraries in Osun State. It reveals that Special collections (82.4%), Archival materials (77.4%), materials in which class assignments are given (73.2%), journals (69%), Books containing disc (67.6%), Reference materials (66.2%) and Graphical materials (66.2%) were affected by theft and vandalism.

**Research Question 3:**

**What Are The Factors That Are Responsible For Theft And Vandalism Of Information Resources In Academic Libraries In Osun State?**

**Table 3: Factors That Are Responsible For Theft And Vandalism Of Information Resources In Academic Libraries**

S/N	Items	Agree		Disagree		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1.	Economic depression /poverty	110	77.5	32	22.5	142	100
2.	Lack of user orientation	94	66.2	48	33.8	142	100
3.	Natural disaster	43	30.3	99	69.7	142	100
4.	Lack of vigilance of security guards	73	51.4	69	48.6	142	100
5.	Users selfishness /laziness	78	54.9	64	45.1	142	100
6.	Denial of access to some relevant library materials	88	62	54	38	142	100
7.	Delinquency (an urge to steal or destroy library materials)	52	36.7	90	63.3	142	100
8.	Lack of photocopy	43	30.2	99	69.8	142	100
9.	Insufficient copies of information materials in library.	53	37.3	89	62.7	142	100

Table 3 displays factors that are responsible for theft and vandalism of library materials in academic libraries in Osun State. It reveals that Economic depression/ poverty (77.5%), lack of user orientation (66.2%), Denial of access to some relevant library materials (62%), user selfishness/laziness (54.9%) and lack of vigilance of security guards (51.4%) were factors that are responsible for theft and vandalism of library materials.

**RESEARCH QUESTION 4:**

**What Are The Effects Of Theft And Vandalism Of Information Resources On Library And Users In Academic Libraries In Osun State?**

**Table V: Effects Of Theft And Vandalism Of Information Resources On Library And Users**

S/N	Items	Agree		Disagree		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1.	Reduces library stocks	99	69.7	43	30.3	142	100
2.	Reduce the lifespan of library materials	92	64.8	50	36.3	142	100
3.	Prevent students from locating needed materials	94	66.2	48	33.8	142	100
4.	Leads to frustration	108	76	34	24	142	100
5.	Damage the image of the library	130	91.5	12	8.5	142	100
6.	Leads to low performance in examination	76	53.5	66	46.5	142	100
7.	Affect quality of research	142	100	0	0	142	100
8.	Cause users to desist from going to the library	129	90.8	13	9.2	142	100
9.	Defacing library materials	136	81.6	26	18.4	142	100
10.	Add unnecessary burden to library budget	129	90.8	13	9.2	142	100
11.	Poor library services delivery	95	66.9	47	33.1	142	100

Table 4 exposes the effects of theft and vandalism of library materials on library and its users in academic libraries in Osun State. From the table above, it can be deduce that all items listed; affect quality of research (100%), Damage the image of the library (91.5%), Add unnecessary burden to library budget (90.8%), cause users to desist from going to the library (90.8%), Deface library materials (81.6%), leads to frustration (76%), Reduce library stocks (69.7%), poor library services delivery (66.9%), prevent students from locating needed materials (66.2%), Reduce the lifespan of library materials (64.8%) and leads to low performance in examination (53.5%) were the effects of theft and vandalism of library materials in academic libraries.

**VI. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

Based on the findings, result showed that respondents supported that the extent of theft and vandalism of library materials in academic libraries were high. This was supported by Aguolu (2002) that “high incidence of theft and mutilation gradually depletes information resources and reduces the librarian effectiveness”. In line with Okoye-Ikonta (1981) findings that theft ranked highest, followed by mutilation among the security problems encountered by libraries.

The findings also revealed that special collections, archival materials, materials in which class assignments are given, journals, books containing disc, reference materials, and graphical materials are affected by theft and vandalism. These findings agreed with Ajegbomogun (2004) and Forley (2007) that the focus of abuse was predominantly on reference materials, journals, rare books and archives. These findings also agreed with Bello (1993) and Ogunrombi (1994) who identified special collections pictures, films, microfilm and film, CD-ROM and color negatives as the most targeted materials susceptible to theft and vandalism.

Furthermore, respondents agreed that economic depression/poverty, lack of user orientation, denial of access to some relevant library materials, user’s selfishness/ laziness, and lack of vigilance of security guards are responsible for theft and vandalism. These findings agreed with Abareh (2001) and Akor (2013) that economic depression, security and selfishness are the main factors that contributed to theft and vandalism of library materials.

Finally, respondents agreed that all the items listed: affect quality of research, damage the image of library, cause users to desist from going to the library, add unnecessary burden to library budget, deface library materials, lead to frustration, reduction of library stock, poor library services delivery, reduce the lifespan of library materials, prevent students from locating needed materials and leads to low performance in examination could result from theft and vandalism of library materials. These findings is in line with Jato (2005) who outlined reduction in library stock, reduction in lifespan of the mutilated material, leads to extra cost among other factors as the effects of theft and vandalism of library materials on library and its users.

**VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The observations and findings in this study confirmed that the extent of damages caused by theft and vandalism to library materials in academic libraries were high, with reference materials, books containing discs, graphical materials, journals, archival materials, special collections and materials in which class assignments are given, being the most susceptible, and in no small measure affect the academic libraries and their users.

## VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these findings, the researchers recommends that:

1. Policy formulation that will guide against every form of theft and vandalism should be provided and fully implemented to address security breaches.
2. Library users should be properly checked at the library exits so that they do not leave library premises with library materials or mutilated materials. Porters should ensure that bags and folders of users are kept in the cloakroom.
3. Library management should provide various security facilities such as electronic security networks, effective video surveillance and close circuit television in strategic areas of the library. Constant power supply should also be guaranteed.
4. Proper shelving and shelve reading should be encouraged as this would help librarians locate misplaced materials that have been hidden by selfish users.
5. Detailed library guide should be pasted at the conspicuous location in the library.
6. Unstoppable access to relevant information materials should be guaranteed.
7. Stiff penalties should be well spelt for disobedient and dishonest users associated with theft and vandalism.

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