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## PERCEIVED EFFECT OF THEFT AND MUTILATION OF INFORMATION RESOURCES IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

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### Abstract

The study investigated the effect of theft and mutilation of information resources in university libraries in Benue State, Nigeria. The study was guided by four research questions. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. Population of the study comprised three hundred (300) library users drawn from three universities in Benue State. The entire population was studied hence there was no sampling as the size was manageable. A structured questionnaire titled, "Questionnaire on Effect of Theft and Mutilation of Information Resources in Academic Libraries in Universities in Benue State (QETMIRALUBS)" was used for data collection. Data collected were analyzed using mean scores and standard deviation (SD). The study found that theft and mutilation of information resources exist in the university libraries studied. The finding also revealed among others that; theft and mutilation cause frustration to librarians and library users. It also makes materials less useful and causes shortage of library materials. Result of the analysis also revealed that all library materials in the three universities in Benue State were vulnerable to theft and mutilation except audio visual materials. All the factors listed in this study were responsible for theft and mutilation except the high demand of a particular book by users. The study also found out that some of the measures or strategies that could be used to combat theft and mutilation in these libraries include the provision of enough security, mounting of Close Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras in the libraries as well as, periodic searching of hostels and staff offices. Based on these findings, it was recommended that the university administration should endeavor to provide enough reading materials, photocopying facility, among others.

**Keywords:** *University Library, Information Resources, Theft and Mutilation, CCTV, Benue State, Nigeria.*

### Introduction

Popoola and Haliso (2009) defined information resources as those library materials that are in both printed and electronic formats. They include textbooks, serials, CD-ROM databases, and Internet resources among others. These information resources are usually available in the library for users to access. The university library faces different challenges in the course of providing these information resources to meet the needs of its users. These challenges according to Ozowa et al. (2016) include defacing, misshelving of books, fire outbreaks, vandalism, theft and

mutilation. These crimes are often committed in the library either individually or with the aid of library staff. Theft and mutilation are prevalent crimes in the library and have become a major concern to researchers and information professionals. It has become a concern to the library. The new *Encyclopedia Britannica* has defined theft in the library as unauthorized removal of information resources or equipment from the library premises. Theft in the library involves the act of stealing property within or around the library premises either as an individual or with the aid of someone in the library (staff).

Mutilation on the other hand is the unlawful removal of a vital part of an information resource. Isebe (2014) noted that mutilation includes such acts as removing book pages, highlighting, underlining text, marking notices in margins and adding materials, such as stickers or letters that are not meant to be part of the material. People mutilate information resources when they knowingly tear, mark on, maliciously render imperfect or otherwise damage or destroy library material.

Theft and mutilation of information resources are anti-social, unlawful act and an offence that is punishable by law; perpetrators can be denied access to the library. Theft and mutilation have become a cankerworm and have eaten deep into the academic library system without distinction (Isebe, 2014). These crimes seem to persist despite the security measures provided by libraries. These acts are anti library development. Libraries from antiquity are known as institutions charged with the responsibility of preservation of human knowledge. Theft and mutilation often times frustrate both readers and librarians. Non-recovery of stolen or mutilated materials smacks of inefficiency. It may also have devastating effect on the readers and the library as it helps to reduce the library collection. Theft and mutilation reduce the quality and quantity of information resources in the library. It could cause dissatisfaction to library users. According to Mwantimwa (2007), a lot of money is spent to replace stolen materials and repair of mutilated materials in the library.

Different researchers in the field of librarianship have suggested solution to the crimes of theft and mutilation in the library. Some suggested the use of modern security measures like Close Circuit Television (CCTV). Ajayi and Omotayo (2003) suggested that academic libraries should provide more copies of recommended textbooks, provide more security men who also should be more vigilant, and ensure that stiff penalties are meted out to offenders. Yamson and Cobblah (2016) in their study suggested that close circuit television (CCTV) should be included in the security system of the library, use of electronic sensors and electronic surveillance systems to monitor the movement of users and books and finally, the need to adopt well trained and permanent security personnel in the library.

### **Statement of the Problem**

University libraries in Benue State face a lot of security challenges with their collection. Some of these challenges include vandalism, manhandling of resources, misshelving, theft and mutilation of information resources. Theft and mutilation of library materials are crimes often committed by some library users through unauthorized removal, stealing, defacement, tearing and rendering information resources useless. These have affected university libraries as it deprives users the opportunity of utilizing needed information resources. It also helps to deplete the library collection. A lot of researchers in the field of librarianship have investigated this menace and suggested different ways to reduce its occurrence in university libraries. None of these researches seems to have been carried out on university libraries in Benue State. This study therefore sought to investigate the effect of theft and mutilation of information resources in university libraries in Benue State.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of the study was to examine the effect of theft and mutilation of information resources in university libraries in Benue State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Ascertain the extent to which theft and mutilation have affected the use of information resources in university libraries in Benue State.
2. Identify information resources that are prone to theft and mutilation in university libraries in Benue state.
3. Determine factors responsible for theft and mutilation of information resources in university libraries in Benue state.
4. Suggest strategies for combating theft and mutilation of information resources in university libraries in Benue State.

### **Research Questions**

1. To what extent has theft and mutilation affected the use information resources in university libraries in Benue State?
2. What information resources are prone to theft and mutilation in these libraries?

3. What factors are responsible for the theft and mutilation of information resources in university libraries in Benue State?
4. What strategies could be adopted to combat theft and mutilation of information resources in university library in Benue State?

### Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. Population of the study was three hundred (300) library users drawn from three universities in Benue State namely (Federal University of Agriculture Makurdi; Benue State University and University of Mkar). The entire population of 300 library users were studied, hence there was no sampling because the population was considered small and could be managed by the researchers. This comprised (100 library users from Francis Sulemanu Idachaba Library in Federal University of Agriculture Makurdi, 100 library users from Benue State University Library and 100 library users from Chief Asom Bur Learning Resource Centre in University of Mkar). Instrument for data collection was a questionnaire titled "Questionnaire on Effect of Theft and Mutilation of Information Resources in University libraries in Benue State (QETMIRALUBS). A total of 300 copies of the questionnaire were distributed and same number were returned. The questionnaire was divided into four (4) clusters. Cluster 1 sought information on the extent which theft and

mutilation has affected information resources in libraries in universities in Benue State. It was designed on four-point rating scale of VHE (Very High Extent), HE (High Extent), LE (Low Extent) and VLE (Very Low Extent) respectively. Cluster 2 sought information on the information resources that are vulnerable to theft and mutilation in universities in Benue State. The response options were SA (Strongly Agree), A (Agree), D (Disagree) and SD (Strongly Disagree) respectively. Cluster 3 sought information on factors that are responsible for theft and mutilation of information resources in libraries in universities in Benue State. The response options were SA (Strongly Agree), A (Agree), D (Disagree) and SD (Strongly Disagree) respectively. Cluster 4 was focused on possible measures or strategies that can be used to combat theft and mutilation of information resources in libraries in universities in Benue State. The response options were SA (Strongly Agree), A (Agree), D (Disagree) and SD (Strongly Disagree) respectively.

Data collected were analyzed using mean ( $\bar{X}$ ) and standard deviation (SD). A benchmark of 2.50 and above was used to determine any item that received positive rating while any item with a mean rating below 2.50 was regarded as negative.

### Result and Discussion

**Research Question 1:** To what extent has theft and mutilation affected the use information resources in university libraries in Benue State?

**Table 1:** Mean and standard deviation of extent to which theft and mutilation has affected the use of information resources in university libraries in Benue State (N=300)

S/N	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remarks
1	Makes materials less useful	3.23	0.95	Agree
2	Causes frustration to librarians and library users	3.33	1.08	Agree
3	Causes dissatisfaction among library users	3.11	1.08	Agree
4	Shortage of library materials	3.23	1.08	Agree
5	Reduction in quality of teaching, learning and research	3.00	1.18	Agree
6	More money is spent to replace and repair stolen and mutilated materials	3.12	1.26	Agree
7	Denial of timely access to needed resources	2.95	1.12	Agree
8	Discouraging and disappointing due to access to critical information	3.09	1.15	Agree
<b>Grand Mean and Standard Deviation</b>		<b>3.13</b>	<b>1.11</b>	<b>Agree</b>

**Source:** Field survey, 2020

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of extent to which theft and mutilation has affected the use of information resources in university libraries in Benue State: Findings reveal frustration to librarians and library users ( $\bar{X}=3.33$  and  $SD=1.08$ ), makes materials less useful ( $\bar{X}=3.23$  and  $SD=0.95$ ), shortage of library materials ( $\bar{X}=3.23$  and  $SD=1.08$ ), more money is spent to replace and repair stolen and mutilated materials ( $\bar{X}=3.12$  and  $SD=1.26$ ), causes dissatisfaction to library users ( $\bar{X}=3.11$  and  $SD=1.08$ ), discouraging and disappointing due to denial of access to critical information ( $\bar{X}=3.09$  and  $SD=1.15$ ), reduction in quality of teaching, learning and research ( $\bar{X}=3.00$  and  $SD=1.18$ ), denial of timely access to needed resources ( $\bar{X}=2.95$  and  $SD=1.12$ ) and grand mean ( $\bar{X}=3.13$  and  $SD=1.11$ ).

This result shows that the respondents agreed that the 8 items were the extent to which theft and mutilation has affected the use of information resources in university libraries in Benue State. The finding of this study agrees with Ajala and Oyeboade (2008) who noted in their study that theft and mutilation are problems that have affected information resources in academic libraries. It also agrees with Ajayi and Omotayo (2003) who discovered that theft and mutilation impact negatively on the academic life of users and deprive users of vital information. The finding of this study is also in line with the finding of Adekunle et al. (2018) who noted that theft and mutilation affect the quality of research, damage the image of the library, add unnecessary burden to the library budget, discourage users from using the library, leads to frustration and reduces the library stock.

**Research Question 2.** What information resources are prone to theft and mutilation in these libraries?

**Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of information resources prone to theft and in university libraries in Benue State. (N=300)**

S/N	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remarks
9	Textbooks	3.15	1.25	Agree
10	Journals	2.88	1.13	Agree
11	Magazines	3.03	1.08	Agree
12	Reference materials	3.06	1.25	Agree
13	Project/theses/dissertations	3.01	1.28	Agree
14	Government publications	2.86	1.32	Agree
15	Term papers	2.77	1.27	Agree
16	Reports	2.90	1.28	Agree
17	Newspapers	2.85	1.39	Agree
18	Newsletters	2.64	1.35	Agree
19	Compact Discs (CDs)	2.71	1.36	Agree
20	CD ROMs	2.72	1.18	Agree
21	Audio visual materials	2.44	1.24	Disagree
22	Computers	3.05	1.30	Agree
<b>Grand Mean and Standard Deviation</b>		<b>2.86</b>	<b>1.26</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation of information resources that are prone to theft and mutilation of information resources in university libraries in Benue State. The result revealed that 13 out of 14 items had their mean values ranging from 2.64 to 3.15. This shows that 13 items were agreed by the respondents as resources that are

vulnerable to theft and mutilation in university libraries in Benue State. The table also revealed that one of the items with a mean score of 2.44 is below the benchmark of 2.50. This means that the respondents disagreed that item 21 was not vulnerable to theft and mutilation in these libraries. The Table further revealed that the

standard deviation of the items ranged from 1.08 to 1.39, indicating that the respondents were not too far from the mean and opinion of each other in their responses on theft and mutilation in academic libraries in universities in Benue State. The finding of this study is in line with the findings of Adekunle et al. The finding agrees with Ajala and Oyeboade (2008) who asserted that reference materials and periodicals are the most stolen and mutilated information resources in university libraries. It agrees with Isebe (2014);

Idris et al. (2013) who in their studies found that textbooks, newspapers, reference materials magazines and journals are often stolen and mutilated information resources in libraries. The finding of this study also agrees with the finding of Olajide (2017) who posits that frequently used information resources in the library are books, journals, encyclopedias and dictionaries. These according to his findings are the most stolen and mutilated information resources in the library.

**Research Question 3:** What factors are responsible for the theft and mutilation of information resources in university libraries in Benue State?

**Table 3: Mean and standard deviation** of factors responsible for theft and mutilation of information resources in university libraries in Benue State. (N=300)

S/N	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remarks
23	High cost of books	3.08	1.31	Agree
24	Lack of functional photocopying machine	2.89	1.12	Agree
25	Insufficient copies of books in the library	2.67	1.33	Agree
26	High demand for books	2.53	1.27	Agree
27	Laziness of students	2.61	1.19	Agree
28	Pressure on having a good grade	2.51	1.33	Agree
29	High demand for a particular book	2.32	1.29	Disagree
30	To sneak them into the exam hall	2.78	1.11	Agree
31	Uncared attitude of library staff towards library users	2.73	1.22	Agree
32	Fear of not locating the material when next student visits	2.82	1.40	Agree
<b>Grand Mean and Standard Deviation</b>		<b>2.69</b>	<b>1.26</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Table 3 shows the mean and standard deviation of factors responsible for the theft and mutilation of information resources in university libraries in Benue State. The result revealed that 9 out of 10 items listed in the table received positive mean rating ranging from 2.51 to 3.08. This shows that 9 items were agreed by the respondents as factors responsible for the theft and mutilation of information resources in university libraries in Benue State. The table also revealed that one item with a mean score of 2.32 is below the benchmark of score of 2.50 meaning that the respondents disagreed that is a factor responsible for theft and

mutilation of information resources in these libraries. Analysis in Table 3 further showed that the standard deviation of the items ranged from 1.11 to 1.40. This finding agrees with the finding of Olajide, (2017) and Idris et al. (2013) who in their study found that high cost of books, lack of photocopying facilities and inadequacy of books and other information materials in the library are some of the factors that cause theft and mutilation in university libraries. The finding of this study agrees with the finding of Nweke (2019) who revealed that the high cost of books, inadequate photocopying facility, poor security system, and

absence of electronic security measures are some of the factors that cause theft and mutilation of information resources in university libraries. Ajayi and Omotayo (2003) had earlier noted that

insensitivity to the need of users and the high cost of books are some of the factors that cause theft and mutilation in university libraries.

**Research Question 4:** What strategies could be adopted to combat theft and mutilation of information resources in university library in Benue State?

**Table 4: Mean and standard deviation of strategies to combat theft and mutilation of information resources in university libraries in Benue State. (N=300)**

S/N	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remarks
33	Provision of multiple copies of textbooks	3.06	1.07	Agree
34	Allowing all library materials to be borrowed	3.00	1.07	Agree
35	Better library services	3.57	0.90	Agree
36	Reduction in cost of photocopying	3.32	0.93	Agree
37	Periodic searching of hostels and staff offices	3.63	0.59	Agree
38	Provision of Enough security guards in the library	3.76	0.66	Agree
39	Mount CCTV cameras in the library	3.73	0.69	Agree
40	Users should be given Good orientation	3.62	0.83	Agree
	<b>Grand Mean and Standard Deviation</b>	<b>3.46</b>	<b>0.84</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Table 4 shows the mean rating and standard deviation of strategies to combat theft and mutilation of information resources in university libraries in Benue State. These include provision of enough security guards in the library ( $\bar{X}=3.76$  and  $SD=0.66$ ), mounting of CCTV cameras in the library ( $\bar{X}=3.73$  and  $SD=0.69$ ), periodic searching of hostels and staff offices ( $\bar{X}=3.63$  and  $SD=0.59$ ), users should be given good orientation ( $\bar{X}=3.62$  and  $SD=0.83$ ), better library services ( $\bar{X}=3.57$  and  $SD=0.90$ ), reduction in the cost of photocopying ( $\bar{X}=3.32$  and  $SD=0.93$ ), provision of multiple copies of textbooks ( $\bar{X}=3.06$  and  $SD=1.07$ ), allowing all library materials to be borrowed ( $\bar{X}=3.00$  and  $SD=1.07$ ) and grand mean ( $\bar{X}=3.46$  and  $SD=0.84$ ) respectively.

This result shows that the respondents agreed that the 8 items are possible strategies that could be adopted to combat theft and mutilation of information resources in university libraries in

Benue State. The finding of this study agrees with the finding of Isebe (2014) who found out that the provision of multiple copies of books, better library services and reduction in the cost of photocopying are some of the measures to combat theft and mutilation in academic libraries. The study also agrees with Idris et al. (2013) and Olajide (2017) who suggested that libraries should install Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) and enough copies of books should be provided in the libraries to check theft and mutilation of information resources. Ajala and Oyeboade (2008) suggested that adequate security systems and photocopying services should be provided to tackle theft and mutilation in the academic library. The finding is also in line with the finding of Nweke (2019) who suggested that the Close Circuit Television (CCTV) system should be deployed in libraries as a major security system to secure library collections and that this should be closely monitored.



## Summary of Findings

From the analysis, the study found that:

1. Theft and mutilation of information resources highly affect the use of information in university libraries in Benue State.
2. Information resources like textbooks, reference materials, computers, magazines, projects/theses/dissertations among others information resources most prone to theft and mutilation in university libraries in Benue State.
3. Factors responsible for the high incidence of theft and mutilation of information resources in university libraries were high cost of textbooks, lack of functional photocopying machines, and fear of not locating the materials when the next student visits the library.
4. Measures/ strategies to be adopted to check theft and mutilation of information resources in university libraries in Benue State were provision of enough security guards in the library, mounting CCTV

cameras in the library, periodic searching of hostels and staff offices, and user orientation among others.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of this study.

1. University administration should be notified constantly on how theft and mutilation can affect the usage of information resources universities libraries in Benue state.
2. More security gadgets should be provided to check information resources like textbooks, reference materials, computers, magazines, projects/theses/dissertations among others as they are prone to theft and mutilation in university libraries in Benue state.
3. The university administration should also subsidize the cost of textbooks and provide functional photocopying machines in university libraries in Benue state.
4. More security guards should be provided and CCTV should be installed in university libraries in Benue state to check theft and mutilation of information resources.

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