

USERS' PERCEPTION OF LIBRARY USE MALPRACTICES: CASE STUDY OF UNIVERSITY OF CALABAR LIBRARY, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated library users perception of library use malpractices in academic libraries; using University of Calabar as a case study. Simple random sampling technique was use to draw a sample of 500 users from a population of 1804 registered users of the library. Questionnaire was use for data collection. The study revealed that users are aware of deviant behaviours which management's effort to curb did not yield fruits in the past. Study also reveal how frustrating how users felt at the observance of these deviancies. In their opinion, they wish that punishments on different acts of deviance be specified, encouraged continuous teaching of use of library with emphasis on rules and regulations as well as motivate staff to boost their level of vigilance. Study recommended adherence to user's opinion and an addition of counseling to users-orientation programmes which should be continuous till users graduate.

Keywords: Library users, Deviant behaviours, Academic Libraries, Delinquency, Users Opinion.

Introduction

There has been a general dissatisfaction with the results from our education system inspite of government efforts at different levels to improve the system. Some have complained about falling standards, others argue that learners are no more willing to learn and / or cooperate with management to achieve educational aims and objectives. The rate of unrest and personal behaviours (Deviant and Delinquent) leave much to be desired. Fayose (1995) held that the various complaints are bound to continue except students (library users') are taught and given opportunity to learn; otherwise, they would try to exhibit their exuberance in ways which the community of adults consider

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There is an increasing awareness of the importance of learning resources in the —education for allll, the world over. The concept of library resources which would depend upon the emphasis placed on it by the educational institution served and its target audience can therefore not be overemphasized in terms of its roles and function. This is because the general purpose of education is to pass on to generation yet unborn, society's cultural values and accumulated knowledge, preparing citizens for better and meaningful lives ahead. According to Lawal (2008) the success of any library quality assurance programme is mainly determined by the satisfaction of the users with library's services. Academic libraries are established to cater for the information needs of its constituency – student, lecturers, researchers and other community of scholars. No wonder scholars describe it as the heart or nerve – centre of the educational institution. It is also a crucial centre in the educational development of man at any level and more particularly so, in any academic pursuit. It is a repository of knowledge, a large reservoir from which information can be tapped.

The outstanding purpose of any academic library is to provide quality information services and access to relevant information. In order to function and provide timely and satisfactory information as at when due, they must be adherence to rules and regulations governing the use of library. However, over the years' experience has shown that users' have refused to be disciplined, exhibiting deviant and delinquent behaviours. According to Ahiauzu and Igben (2008) these behaviours are intractable and perennial global menace, affecting all types of libraries especially academic, where users' are frequently caught directly in the act, indicating that it has become a culture among users. Deviant and delinquent behaviours in academic libraries shown in the form of book theft, book mutilation, defacing materials with pen or pencils, keeping materials long overdue, assault on staff members, drinking or eating inside the library, hiding materials in other shelves and answering phone calls inside the library without minding the distraction effect on other users.

Alafiatayo, (1991) Gregson and Hockings (1995); report that some library users in the process of using the library involved in delinquent behaviours which includes mutilation of books, outright stealing, noise making, graffiti writings (on books, tables and walls) and hiding of books from their proper shelves.

Over the years, researchers have conducted several studies as a result of the increase in deviant and delinquent behaviours. These behaviours have been found to hamper the activities of the libraries as well as discourage the achievement of the general aims and objectives of the educational system.

Instead of seeing a reduction in the rate of deviancy, the problem is aggravated by persistent cases of library misuse. This situation becomes worrisome as library operations are hampered in view of the menace. Thus, this study aims at investigating library users' perception of deviant and delinquent behaviours in academic libraries.

Objectives of the study:

The study is aimed at the following:

1. To find out whether users' are aware of the existence of deviant and delinquent behaviours in academic libraries.
2. To find out whether users' are aware of the disciplinary measures put in place to check deviant behaviours.
3. To seek users' opinion on how deviancy in academic libraries affect their extent of use of the library.
4. To seek users' opinion on ways to solve deviant and delinquent behaviours in academic libraries.

Literature review

A survey of previous literature shows that a great deal of research has been done on the misuse of information materials in libraries based on deviant and delinquent behaviours of users. Some scholars investigated document deterioration as a result of users' mishandling of materials, others sorted for the different ways that deviant and delinquent behaviours are showcased. Still, others narrowed their study to the issues of theft and mutilation. Harvey (1992) revealed that library of congress estimated that 34percent of its final collection were either completely unusable or damaged because of users' misuse of the collection. Bellagio (1996) in a survey conducted at Oxford University library on condition of collection stated that more than a quarter of a million volumes (250

thousand volumes) out of 9.7 million were estimated to have been damaged as a result of users' mishandling.

Literature in library users' opinion on deviant and delinquent behaviours is scarce in Nigeria but some related literatures that have close connections and semblances are brought to focus. Aliero (2003) gave an account of how organization of information materials in ancient libraries were practiced leading to the introduction of various classification schemes to ensure professional arrangement of library holdings. He added that unfortunately, in spite of these classification scheme used in academic libraries, the holdings are still in chaos as a result of misuse.

Also, Smith (1990) lamented that scholarly information is in chaos and the librarians are charged to bring order to this unfortunate situation. It is not uncommon to find books of the same title physically scattered on a shelf or placed on different shelves. It not also uncommon to find materials in the same subject abysmally separated from each other. It has been observed that some library users particularly students miss-shelve materials for their selfish ends. In three other studies carried out by Ajileye (1984), Agboola (1984) and Agboola (1995), the authors found that both staff and students (users) are largely responsible for library misuse. Rowley (1997) studying users' behaviour compared it with consumer buying behaviour and explored their applicability in the marketing of library and information services. The author drew a conclusion from user's opinion that understanding information behaviours of user of library and information services is a pre-requisite for providing efficient and adequate library servicesll.

In the revelation of Aliero (2003) users' agreed that when books and other materials are not adequately provided either because of book cost or difficulty in support, they (users) tend to hide those available materials especially if the materials are of high demand. Even though the instruction —leave all materials consulted on the tablell is boldly written in most academic libraries, some users regularly abuse this rule and hide materials for themselves. This is usually the reason why one often finds materials on arts, mixed up with those on sciences or other related materials. Bello (2001); Peters (2000); and Jackson (2005) among others have agreed that deviant behaviours are rampant in academic libraries and they include: book theft, book mutilation, defacing of library materials with

pen markings, keeping materials long overdue as well as hiding materials in-between other shelves within libraries, vandalism, impersonation and direct assault on library staff.

However, management of libraries have not been silent in fighting the surge of this menace as Udofia (2002) revealed, library managements' efforts to curb these lapses in the form of charging fines for overdue materials, suspension of users' from library use facilities where these overdue fines payments are being delayed, banning culprits from outright usage of the library, provision of photocopying services, increase of staff strength to boost security and intensifying the teaching of library use skills in a compulsory manner. It is a known fact that Academic libraries and librarians spend their time, money and efforts battling to acquire, organize and preserve information materials for users benefits. When users misuse them, it is to the detriment and discouragement of both library and other users. The irreparable loses especially on rare materials which are no longer available in the market bothers the library, other users and the future generations since library operations are adversely affected.

Ibok (2000) and Udofia (2002), agreed that removal and hiding of materials away from their original shelves could cause loss and depravity of these materials for so long even after culprit's graduation. In the same way, the defaced library materials which leave permanent stains on pages could be rendered unreadable and useless. This non-availability of library materials could be annoying and frustrating for users and librarians or information managers as it could connote inefficiency on their part.

Alafiatayo (1983) observed that a lot of time, money and the effort geared towards rendering judicious services to client are spent by academic libraries searching for, reordering and replacing loss or torn pages of books and journals. Alafiatayo (1983) urged and suggested that during the freshmen library orientation, talk on the harm inflicted on library and other users, the cost of reordering, reclassification and recataloguing of materials etc. (if the titles are not already out of print), should be stressed so that the users can appropriate the losses in terms of time, money and labour.

The trend from the surveys cited and the review highlighted suggest serious effects of deviant and delinquent behaviours on general library

operations thus necessitating an investigation from users' perspective aimed at curbing these menace.

Methods

Survey research design was used for the study. The study was carried out in University of Calabar library. A population of the Study was 1804 registered library users. Simple random sampling technique was adopted in selecting 500 registered users as respondents for the study. Thus the sample size is 500 respondents (library users). 100 respondents were drawn from each of the five units of the Reader Services Divisions of the University Library. They include; social science library, Humanities library, medical library, Law Reference library and science and Technology library. Questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. Simple percentages was used to analyze the magnitude of response from respondents.

Findings and discussion

Table I: Users awareness of Deviancy in academic libraries.

S/NO	Option	Yes	%	No	%	Total
1.	I am a duly registered user of the library	500	100	-	-	500
2.	I use the library very frequent	378	75.6	122	14.4	500
3.	I am always satisfied with document search	187	37.4	313	62.6	500
4.	Sometimes, I see materials without complete pages	480	96	20	4	500
5.	I've observed unreadable materials because of pen markings	463	92.6	37	7.4	500

6. I have personally 326 65.2 174 34.8 500 witnessed users

being caught exhibiting deviant behaviours.

From Table 1, 378 (75.6%) of respondents frequently used the library while 122 (24.4%) come in for some special periods. Also only 187 (37.4%) of users were always satisfied in their search for document. 480 (96%) and 463 (92.6%) of users revealed their awareness of different deviant behaviours in library and 326 (65.2%) agreed to the fact that they had personally witnessed users being caught in the act of deviance.

Table 2: Knowledge of Management's Measures to curb deviancy.

S/NO	Option	Yes	%	No	%	Total
1.	Teaching use of library with emphasis on rules and regulations	500	100	-	-	500
2.	Arrest of culprits for the University law to take its course	350	70	150	30	500
3.	Payment of fines for overdue materials	473	94.6	27	5.4	500
4.	Suspension from use of library till accumulated fines are paid by user	100	20	400	80	500
5.	Replacement of vandalized materials	378	75.6	12.2	24.4	500

All the respondents are aware that teaching use of library is managements' effort to curb deviancy in libraries. 350 (70%) also knew that user with deviant

behaviours are arrested for due process of the law. 473 (94.6%) of respondents reveal awareness in the payment of fines as well as replacement of vandalized materials (75.6%). One fifth (20%) have the knowledge that users' exhibiting deviancy can be suspended while 400 (80%) indicate not being aware.

Table 3: User's deviancy effect on the extent of use of the library.

S/NO	Option	Yes	%	No	%	Total
1.	Deviant behaviours limit my getting appropriate materials for my needs.	485	97	15	3	500
2.	I always feel bad when I experience it in mutilation of book and materials in the library	390	78	110	22	500
3.	Its annoying and frustrating when discovered	498	99.6	2	0.4	500
4.	It seems like the experience of these behaviours also encourage user with such inherent behaviours to continue exhibiting them.	392	78.6	108	21.6	500
5.	It discourages me from thinking of using the library for my search for	420	84	80	16	500

document.

Results from table 3, indicates 485 (97%) of users reveals that deviant behaviours limit them from getting the appropriate materials they need. Concerning their feeling, 390 (78%) uphold that they feel bad when it's showcased in mutilation.

498 (99.6%) reveals they always feel annoyed and are frustrated in their search for information. Also, 392 (78.4%) nurse the feeling that there is a contagious effect especially those user with such traits inherent in them quickly key in to increase deviance. Again 420 (84%) reveals that it is discouraging them from the thought of using the library.

Table 4: User's Opinion to curb deviant/delinquent behaviours

S/NO	Option	Yes	%	No	%	Total
1.	Specify punishment on deviant acts:	342	68.5	15.8	31.6	500
a.	overdue materials- payment of fines					
b.	Delayed payment of fines for overdues materials - suspension from use of library facilities	300	60	200	40	500
c.	Mutilation - keep record of culprits and let them repeat a year of study after replacement of vandalized materials.	378	75.6	122	24.4	500
d.	continuous mutilation or outright theft of materials- users should be placed on rustication.	297	59.4	203	40.6	500

2.	Continuous teaching of library skills with emphasis on rules and regulations	500	100	-	-	500
3.	Seek ways to motivate staff so they can be more vigilant in checking users.	420	84	80	16	500

For specific punishments to the different acts of deviance (keeping overdue materials, delayed payments for overdue books, mutilation and outright stealing of library records) users showed a high percentage of agreement. 100% of user agreed that library skills teaching should be continuous with emphasis on rules and regulations. 84% of respondents felt that staff should be motivated to encourage vigilance.

Discussions

The study revealed that users who use the library frequently are aware of deviant/delinquent behaviours in academic libraries and some had personally witnessed cases where culprits were caught in the act. This finding agreed with Jackson (2005) and Bello (2001) who revealed that deviant behaviours are rampant in academic libraries. The study revealed a high level of awareness on management's effort to control deviant acts which have really proved in-effective to curb these vices. This finding corresponds with Udofia (2002) who highlighted different ways that library management had tried to control deviant acts in academic libraries.

The study indicated that user was always left frustrated as they cannot get appropriate materials to meet their needs as a result of deviant behaviours exhibited by their fellow users. The study revealed that user unanimously agreed to the following, as measures to curb deviant/delinquent behaviours.

- Punishment of deviant acts should be more specific according to the gravity with regards to keeping overdue materials, delayed payments, mutilation and outright theft.
- Continuous teaching of library skills with much emphasis on rules and regulations governing the use of the library.

- Motivation of staff members to boost their level of vigilance and checkmate the users.

Conclusion

On the basis of the findings of this study, it was concluded that users are not ignorant of deviant behaviours in academic libraries. They are also aware of management efforts to control these vices and suggested among others a continuous teaching of library skills with emphasis on rules and regulations.

While adhering to their opinion, the researcher recommends that the rules and regulations be modified to suit current trend in cost of acquisition and organization of library materials. There should be room for adding counseling into the library skills study. For example, at orientation, all students (prospective library users) should go through a counseling process which will not be adhoc but continuous throughout the years of study.

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