USER DELINQUENCY IN SELECTED ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN KADUNA STATE; ITS EFFECT ON LIBRARY COLLECTION

By

Lovet 0. Esievo (Mrs.), and Z.Mohammed
National Animal Production Research Institute,
Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

ABSTRACT

The study examines forms of user delinquency in academic libraries in Kaduna State using survey research method. Questionnaires were administered to the librarians of fifteen (15) academic libraries Followed by personal visits that also allowed for oral interviews. All the questionnaires administrated were collected on the spot after completion by the respondents, thus giving a response rate of 100%. The study reveals that there are various forms of delinquent acts in academic libraries in Kaduna Slate.

The study concludes that user delinquency is a phenomenon that exists and that academic librarians must intensify their efforts and adopt more effective methods of arresting the ugly trend in their libraries. It is recommended that close circuit television camera be used as a mode of surveillance and counseling the users in order to guard against deliquency in an academic librarv

INTRODUCTION

The existence and prevalence of delinquency is inimical to the goals and objectives of a library. Delinquency robs the library of vital materials for research and learning. This inevitably affects the organisation the library is to serve and subsequently, the services the library is rendering to its researchers or reading communities. Library delinquencies cover a whole range of antisocial or deviant acts such as over-borrowing, illegal borrowing, theft, mutilation, defacement, double registration, hiding of books in wrong places in the library, forging of Library ownership stamps, impersonation, eating in the library, noise making, non-return of over-due books, reservation of seats for oneself or other users, smoking in the library etc. User delinquency therefore constitutes unruly

behaviour in the library. Indeed, it encompasses those behaviours that have negative effects on the library users, the staff and the materials. It therefore becomes imperative for librarians of academic libraries to perceive and decipher these numerous forms of user delinquencies in order to improve library services to researchers and other users.

In the opinion of Onadiran (1984) there are three parties involved when delinquency takes place, namely: the individual reader, the resource and the library. However, it is often clear that the library is always at the receiving end of all the acts of delinquency. Against the background of diminishing resources in a dwindling economy, growth and development of the library are adversely affected, particularly, when such delinquent acts touch on the materials themselves.

Apart from the professional responsibilities of the libraries to keep their collections safe, they have to make sure that the limited funds available to them are not spent solely on replacing mutilated and stolen books and other materials, instead of injecting these funds to purchase current materials into the library stock. This seriously underscores the importance why academic librarians should have a thorough perception of user delinquency to identify control strategies for approved library services.

Ochu (1991) confirmed the existence of this behaviour in a study conducted in Kashim Ibrahim Library, A.B.U. With the establishment of new tertiary institutions with their academic libraries, it is imperative to investigate the forms of user delinquencies perpetrated in some of these academic libraries.

Literature Review

According to Homby (2006); delinquency is a bad or criminal behaviour usually by young people. Library delinquencies are in the form of borrowing, hiding materials from other users.

Over borrowing is when a user has more borrowing tickets than is legally permitted and therefore, borrows more books at a time than is officially allowed. This is made possible by a user coming to register with more than one name or falsely complaining of loss of some tickets. This may be attributed to the financial constraints experienced by users and the zeal to succeed academically. To check this practice, new users must be asked to submit their admission or appointment letters after meeting all registration requirements. With this, the admission or appointment letter would show that the user had once registered with the library. A careless or busy library staff may mistakenly register a user twice because of faulty filling of registration records. According to Zaki (1994) this measure has been effective, except in the case of replacement of reported loss of borrowing tickets which has given room to the possession of more tickets than is allowed

Extended borrowing is when books that are borrowed are kept longer than the time allowed by the library. The act shows lack of consideration for others who may have need for the same books. Zaki reported his experiences of collecting borrowed books abandoned in the students' toilets, and in the offices of staff that have left the university. Borrowers have been approached or reminded to return overdue books but failed because of the consequence of paying overdue fines. They would prefer abandoning them elsewhere. Checking this group of delinquents has not been easy, though some reported cases of success are available (Zaki, 1994).

Reminders to users could be applied and appreciated by some. Wrong addresses due to change of halls or residence, faculties or departments by users without informing the library to effect the change in their registration further creates problems. Some users ignore the reminders in their pigeon holes. This recovery method has now come to a halt

as there are no funds to procure stationery items. Staff members would normally be sent reminders, then followed by bills for overdue fines. Failure to settle the bills in the library, the bills would then be sent to the Bursary for direct deduction from the staff salary.

Amnesty, a period usually set aside for the return of overdue books without payment of fines is one recovery strategy used by K.I.L. The returns have always been substantial with defaulters appreciating such gestures from the library.

Alafiatayo (1986) confirmed that after overdue, comes mutilation, followed by theft as the most serious delinquent acts in Nigerian University libraries. The magnitude of this has forced the academic libraries under study to put burglary proofs at strategic places in the libraries in order to prevent theft.

Surprise checks at students' hostels have proved effective but only when they are carefully planned. The plan for surprise check must be properly managed and executed without leakages. The timing for such search must be confidential and must be simultaneous. Legal aspect involved should also be put into consideration.

Torch-lights and Gas lamps are provided for use during power failure to forestall any unwholesome act.

Mutilation of library books may be regarded as another form of "theft". This involves the removal of some pages of the book. Defacement is also a form of mutilation. Ink or pencil mark may be used to illegally highlight words in a book. According to Okoye-Ikonta (1984), mutilation in academic libraries could be reduced by adopting the following measures:

Staff on duty should be deployed such that they can keep their eyes on all clients in the reading areas.

It should be emphasised that Photocopying services may be part solution to defacement and theft.

Plain sheets of paper could also be placed in different parts of the library in order to encourage users to copy down information instead of tearing pages.

Okoye-Ikonta argues that "journals and magazines should not be moved to other library areas and certainly no library material should be taken into the toilet rooms."

It is common knowledge that many users remove books from the shelves and simply keep them in different position

Staff members have been linked to book theft in the library. Akpata (1979) alleged that junior staffs are some times used as a channel to get books out of the libraries and that many senior staff borrow unprocessed books by merely signing an improvised register which is usually discarded later and the borrowed books are never returned. Staff and students have been apprehended at the library security check point with illegally removed materials, Zaki study revealed. They hide the books in their dresses, bags or files. In some cases date-due slip for officially checked-out book is removed and used for a book meant to be stolen. Onadiran reported that fake or personally designed date due stamps are some-times brought into the library to check books out illegally.

Impersonation is another form of delinquent behaviour in the library. This is when a person uses some-one else borrowing tickets without permission to borrow library materials and the owner of the tickets is held responsible. Non-staff/student may use fake identity card to register for the purpose of malpractice. Alafiatayo (1986) suggested that impersonation could be minimised by demanding for identity card as well as admission letter at the stage of library registration.

Hiding materials from other users is a selfish behaviour which makes it very difficult to locate materials that are not already on loan, lost or withdrawn from circulation . Books are taken and hidden where they are not supposed to be. This practice is very common in academic libraries. Often books meant for circulation are found on the shelves of reference books. They were brought there to prevent other users from having access to them. Library staff have to carry periodic check or read the shelves regularly.

METHODOLOGY

A survey method (Busha and Harter, 1980) was applied. The population of the study comprises the number of librarians in the academic libraries of institution offering diploma and degree programmes in Kaduna State..

Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

A sample of 15 (fifteen) respondents have been chosen randomly from twenty (20) academic libraries in Kaduna State. This represents 75% the respondent of this study. This is based on the recommendation of Borg and Gall (1979) that a minimum of twenty percent (20%) can be used as sample, if the population is up to 1000.

A random sampling method is then applied to select the respondents from the population.

The instrument used for this study was questionnaire and informal interviews. The justification for this choice is that, it is not only economical in terms of time and funds, it is also the most suitable and widely used instrument for generating data in conducting research through the survey method.

The questionnaires were administered personally to the heads of libraries in the fifteen (15) academic libraries. The completed questionnaires were collected on the same day the visits were made. This was to ensure the safety of the questionnaires against loss or mutilation.

Informal interviews and observations were also conducted asking the respondents information in line with statement in the questionnaire.

The data collected were carefully analysed and the findings were reported accordingly

DATA ANALYSIS

Descriptive statistics and percentages were used to analyse the data collected. The analysed data were presented in tabular and graphic forms to facilitate reading and understanding.

The conclusions drawn were based on the findings obtained.

Results and Discussion

The response rate was hundred percent. The forms of user delinquencies observed in academic libraries during this study are presented in Table 1 showing forms of user delinquency in academic libraries.

Table 2 shows summary of forms of user delinquencies in academic libraries. 13 (thirteen) forms of user delinquencies existed in various degrees in all the selected 15 (fifteen) academic libraries.

The distributions or existence of these user delinquencies are presented in percentages (Table 2)

Due to the fact that some of the libraries investigated were small in size, questions were directed to the heads of these libraries studied. This was because the information required would adequately be provided by them.

Considering the fact that, there are many forms of user delinquencies in academic libraries, the libraries studied were asked to indicate the forms that constitute user delinquency in their libraries.

Table 1 and Table 2 below give the various forms of user delinquencies and the responses from the of the respondents from the libraries under investigation.

TABLE 2: SUMMARY OF FORMS OF USER DELINQUENCY IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

S/NO	Delinquent Acts Identified	F	%
1.	Theft of Library Materials	15	100
2.	Mutilating Library Materials	15	100
3.	Defacing Library Materials	12	80
4.	Delaying Return of Borrowed Library Materials	12	80
5.	Noise making in the Library	10	67
6.	Reserving seats for one-self and other users	10	67
7.	Writing Graffiti in Library walls and furniture	15	100
8.	Eating in the Library	15	100
9.	Sleeping in the Library	2	13
10.	Hiding of Library Materials	15	100
11.	Over borrowing of Library Materials	14	93
12.	Illegal removal of books	15	100
13.	Impersonation of users	10	67

Table 2 shows that theft of library materials is real. All the respondents agreed that it is an act of delinquency. Theft in whatever form is an immoral act and constitutes an act of misconduct in academic library. It is considered one of many user acts of delinquency.

15 (100%) of the respondents indicated that mutilation has to do with damaging a part or the whole of a document, which in turn affects the provision of library service to other users. Twelve libraries (80%) mentioned defacing library materials as a form of user delinquency in libraries, while 3 libraries (20%) did not see it so.

What constitutes defacement in one library may not be so in another, hence the disparity in responses.

12 (Twelve) 80% libraries indicated that delay in return of borrowed library materials on time is an act of user delinquency, while 3 libraries (20%) replied negatively. This variation in responses shows that some acts of delinquencies occur more than others in the libraries.

Ten libraries (66.6%) identified noise making as an act of delinquency, while 5 libraries (33 .3%) did not. Again, this would depend on how the various libraries defined noise making. While some Librarians would tolerate discussions in low tones, others would refer to this as noise making. Group discussions, especially in university setting, are common among library users, but may be done with due consideration for other users. This may not constitute delinquent behaviour as agreed by some the libraries.

Ten libraries (66.6%) considered reservation of seats for oneself and other users as an act which constitutes delinquency. Where there is limited number of seats, the authorities would certainly not allow seats to be reserved for other users. Thus, the response by 5 libraries (33 3%) that they do not consider reservation of seats as a delinquent act clearly supports this

All the respondents (15) (100%) identified writing on the walls and furniture as delinquent acts. This is because responsible behaviour does not encourage the spoiling of properties that are meant for the use of many people by a few individuals.

All the respondents agreed that eating in the library is a factor that constitutes delinquent behaviour. Banning the eating of food in the library is a good decision taken in the interest of library documents. Food can invite rodents (rats) into the library.

Two libraries (13.3%) reported that they considered sleeping in the library as a delinquent act while 13 libraries (86.7%) argued that it was not. Reading is not only a mental exercise but can also affect the physical body by way of fatigue. This sometimes

results in sleep. It is therefore common to find users falling asleep in the course of reading. The 2 libraries (13.3%) that considered sleeping in the library as a delinquent act have their reasons. They deny others opportunity to seats. It could be due to inadequate number of seats, in which case users who fall asleep could deny others the use of the library.

All the libraries studied said hiding of library materials constitutes an act of delinquency. This is obviously selfish, considering the fact that others would also want to use the same materials.

14 (Fourteen) 93.3% respondents agreed that over borrowing of library materials is a delinquent act, while one library (6.7%) did not. Withholding library documents longer than time allowed would mean denying other users access to such documents, and this is not good for the library. The only library (6.7%) which did not consider this as a delinquent act may probably have numerous copies of the titles and thus be impervious to over-borrowing.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings above, it is concluded that the user delinquent acts of significance perpetrated in academic libraries of Kaduna State are theft of library materials, mutilation of library materials, writing of graffiti on library walls and furniture, eating in the library, hiding library materials, defacing library materials and delaying return of borrowed library materials. These constitute a phenomenon that is likely to continue indefinitely and hence academic librarians must intensify their efforts and adopt more effective methods at arresting the ugly situation in libraries.

It is hereby recommended that there should be provision for close circuit television camera to monitor the movement of the library users. Counseling the users on the

negative effects all forms of user delinquencies in academic library collection is not out of place.

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