SECURITY AND CRIME PREVENTION IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Problems of crime and insecurity are affecting libraries even though the problems are generally not perceived as serious. Library crimes certainly have affected libraries for much of their history. In recent years, it appears that the problem has become greater and the impact more spread. This paper examines the problem of crime by providing theories of crime and general overview of crime in libraries. The criminals identified include students, lecturers, and library staff. Factors that encourage crime include age and gender, ease of access, availability of valuable and easily stolen items among others. Reccomended solutions include installing electronic security system, restricted access to the materials, displaying signs that convey legal penalties, extending library hours, providing photocopying machines, security audit, among others.

KEYWORDS: University Libraries, Nigeria library crime, insecurity, causes, prevention, crime theories

INTRODUCTION

Problems of crime and insecurity are affecting libraries even though the problems were generally not perceived as serious. Library crime certainly has affected libraries for much of their history. In recent years it appears that the range of problems has become greater and the impact of crime in and against Libraries have become more spread.

Perhaps the oldest problem is the theft of books. The problem continues today and in many libraries is considered a major operating cost. This involves the theft of rare and expensive books by profit-oriented thieves as well as the theft of expensive but commonplace volumes by 'ordinary' patrons, students and the faculty. Unlike the professional thief, others often steal for selfish reasons; they 'need' the book, they 'like' the book, they 'can't find the book in any other place ' and so on. In academic libraries, the perceived competition for scare resources entices the patron community to steal what they 'must have'. Of course taking a popular volume not only improves one's own chances of success but also simultaneously reduces others chances.

As Libraries continue to develop their non-book resources, these materials become increasingly popular target for thieves. Episodes of theft are not confined to books. Records, tapes, software, hard wares, personal effects and so on, have become favored targets in libraries. At times, these items are not stolen but are mutilated, reducing both the value and usefulness of the materials. Mutilation may be in the form of slashing needed pages from journals or books. In terms of motivation, this action may be similar to theft than vandalism in that the perpetrators goal is to obtain some desired materials rather than destroy it. Acts of property destruction also occur in the library with alarming regularity. Building are defaced and occasionally burned, equipments damaged, and files destroyed. Libraries are also targets for such crimes as contract inflation, over-invoicing, false billings,

and other fraud and theft by employees. The theft of personal items belonging to staff and patron is also a big problem. It is the unusual library that is free of all crime.

Crime against library staff and patrons is the most feared which evoke strong reactions form those involved and concerned. Even when a library is free from personal crimes, the anticipation of a possible episode can be devastating to s' iff and patrons' morale.

Of even greater concern are those problems patrons who are a potential threat to the safety of staff and other patrons. This category include those who use the library for illegal purposes such as making sexual contacts or stealing anything of value including employees and patrons personal property especially handbags and brief cases.

Very little attention has been given to the issue of security and crime prevention. This is unfortunate. The University Library is the heart of intellectual activities of the University. It plays an important role in meeting the overall objectives of the University. This study therefore focuses on the problems of insecurity and crime in the university libraries in Nigeria.

THE INSECURITY AND CRIME SITUATION IN LIBRARIES

The issue of crime and insecurity in libraries is a worldwide phenomenon that has received the attention of librarians, scholars, law-enforcement agent and security experts. It is a problem that started many centuries ago as 'Munn (1935) wrote in an article:

'When the Persians went into Egypt and withdrew papyri from the library of Rameses 11, without stopping for any formalities at the charging desk, there began a practice which has remained to torment libraries ever since. Book theft is as old as libraries themselves. It might also be listed as one of the original and basic sins of mankind'.

In recent years it appears that the range of problems has become greater and the impact of crime in and against libraries more wide spread.

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Theories of crime

Kirkpatrick (1984) a criminologist describes three bodies of theory that can help to explain the origin of crime: biological, psychological and sociological.

According to him, some studies have linked abnormal genetic compositions with criminality while others have identified specific biochemical imbalances among criminal samples. Still others have examined nutritional content in diets of criminals in an effort to explain their transgressions.

As one might imagine biological research is quite controversial in the discipline at present. The empirical evidence pertaining to biology and crime is arguably mixed. Proponents of such studies are disheartened by the ardent skepticism of their scholarly peers and a largely unacceptable public. Perhaps it is the behavioral determinism implicit in biological theories that is unsettling. While biology may indeed contribute to crime in some way, biological theories offer marginal promise to Librarians faced with crime in their libraries.

According to Kirkpatrick (1984) the body of psychological theory addressing crimes may be divided into two: theories that identify mental trauma or psychic pain as sources of criminal behavior. The common element among psychological theories is an emphasis upon individual factors to explain criminal behavior. They share this emphasis with biological, anatomical or genetic dysfunctions; psychological theories emphasize psychic dysfunction or impaired mental development. The foci of biological and psychological theories are decidedly different but both groups rely upon individual level phenomena to explain unlawful behavior. For instance embezzlement, theft and burglary presumably result from improperly developed moral and social consciences. While anger, distrust, poor decision-marking ability and generalized fear are some traits said to be associated with criminal personality. Many of these psychological formulations demonstrate the influence of psychoanalytic thought and developmental psychology. Behavior is seen as an expression of deeply seated trauma or mental conflict. Trauma and conflict are usually described as originating from events surrounding the psychological development of an individual. Seen from this view, criminal behavior is not always rational behavior. Rather, it springs from an individual's irrational reconciliation with the past and its bearing on current situations.

The crime control strategies implicated by these psychological formulations are appropriately individualistic ones. The application of this brand of psychological theory of crime might aid our understanding of some forms of library crime, but does not offer much comfort and solution to librarians who wish to combat that crime.

Kirkpatrick went further to discuss psychological theory, which involves learning principles of behavior. Psychologists and sociologists both have examined the manners in which crime is learned. The promise that learning theories hold for crime control strategies rest with the possibilities that unlawful behavior patterns can be interrupted and extinguished if certain conditions are met.

Learning theories suggest that crime spreads through a social process of contagion. Social process is a system of human interaction, which affects changes in the behavior of the subjects with some degree of persistence (Datta, 1984). It is a process that involves one learning or another (Goslin, (1969). However, the above definitions have one element in common: that they all point to the process through which an individual human may acquire knowledge. One of the most popular concepts is that individual needs, drives and motives are greater 'energizers' of an individual behavior than the influence of social groups.

Learning principles and the process of contagion may be applied successfully to several types of library crime. A sociological imagination requires one to transcend the individual experience and to entertain the structures and workings of human relationships. Sociology is the study of groups, communities, families, neighborhoods, societies and all other social constellations of human interaction. The driving purpose of the discipline is the knowledge of the intricate pattern of human affairs. Crime is a human pattern and sociologists are understandable intrigued with the social forces that create and sustain it.

Since there are several schools of sociological thought, there are equal numbers of ways to approach library crime from a sociological perspective. In the interest of clarity and brevity only two dominant approaches will be discussed. The first of these identifies existing social structural pressures that encourage crime. The second view crime as a natural by-product of conflict between and in social groups.

While it is probably true that most library criminals understand that their behavior is wrong, the actual impetus for their misdeeds may lie elsewhere; social structures can be figuratively forcing their hands. Social structure pressures take many forms. Each arises from the manner in which the economic, political and social systems are organized. {Kirkpatrick, 1984}

For instance crime in Nigeria may spring from the structure of our economic system that is predicted on the assumption that we compete with one another for financial rewards. However the structure of opportunities available is not an open one, which invites access and equal reward to all. The prospective sources of economic and social inequality abound, vividly illustrated in real life by the great number of impoverished and middle-income people and relatively few truly wealthy. Frustration and dissatisfaction with life conditions and social stations may encourage some to get ahead through criminal actions, such as theft and robbery.

The close intersection of our economic and cultural systems offers yet another source of structural pressures that engender crime. We emphasize that wealth and success, widely prescribed goals in our culture, are achieved through diligence and education, the accepted and legitimate means to the ends. In Nigeria, the emphasis placed on goals is far greater than that placed upon legitimate means. When such a disproportionate value is given to wealth, the acceptable ways in which one may attain them can give way to the more expedient means of crime.

The structural pressures towards crime help explain behavior such as book theft and mutilation. The special pressures structured into collegiate life are one example. One highly valued academic goal is of course, a good grade point average. The prescribed avenues for such scholarly achievement are attentive study and sustained efforts over a long period. Compounding the pressure is the fact that students are in competition with one another for the best grades since the academic merit system is based upon a comparative ranking structure. This approach places burden on students and may encourage 'short cuts' around the accepted avenues for scholastic achievement. Illicit library behavior result from an underlying emphasis on goal complemented with a system of structurally limited opportunities to attain them.

OVERVIEW OF CRIMES IN LIBRARIES

The earliest surviving catalogue of the holdings of Cambridge University Library dates from 1424 and lists 122 volumes Ratcliff (1999) but that library as at today possesses only four of the items listed there, (Oates, 1975) The second earliest extant catalogue was complied in 1473 and listed 330 volumes. Of these, 73 are thought to be still in the library today.

The earliest records of the library leave no doubt that crime and insecurity was as major issues for the library then as it is today.

The literature from the viewpoint of the libraries is dispiriting and startling. If the trends in the United State of America are realized here, the outlook is bleak and frightening in Nigeria. The American situation is conveys by Zeidberg (1987) as follows.

'Between 1979 and 1986, American Libraries reported theft and missing materials including: rare books valued at $5,000.000 from Harvard's Zoological Library; 400 books worth $6,000 from the University of New Hampshire; $ 20,000 in rare science books from the DeGolyer collection of the University of Oklahoma; $1. 1 million in plates, engravings and maps, books, and manuscripts from the University of George Washington Library; more than $100,000 in incunabula from Boston College; $200,000 in rare documents from the Thomas A. Edison National Historical Site; $25,00 in books from the general collection at Berkeley;$50.000 in rare numismatic books from UCLA –'to name the more widely reported examples.

Lincoln (1987) reports that 250,000 books were stolen from 100 libraries per annum. University of Maryland lost more than 30,000 volumes while University of California reported losses of 12% of the 150,000 volumes of undergraduate collections. Carnegie reports noted a loss of $63.7million each year (Ratcliff, 1999).

These figures gave some idea of the extent of the problem especially in terms of cost and inconveniences. Similar studies were done in Nigeria by Bello (1997), Oche (2000), Edem (1998) Afolabi (1990), Nwamefor (1974), Achama (1989), Aiokun (1993), Ishaya (1995), and Wyly (1980),

Bello's study was no Nigerian Universities of

Technology libraries and how they are coping with the menace of theft and mutilation. He reported the extent of theft and mutilation and measures to curb the menace which Oche and Nwamefor described as anti-social acts and habits which are universal, persistent and affect adversely, the services of libraries world wide. On how these crimes are committed, Afolabi stated that potential criminals are always monitoring the effectiveness of the library security which, according to Scouter (1976), if it (security) is poor, it is likely that the clientele will steal.

Oche's study was limited to Benue State Polytechnic Library while Edem focused on University of Calabar Law Reference Library and Nwamefor was on 'University Libraries in Nigeria'.

Lincoln and Lincoln (1987) reported that 25% of the library staffs were victims of crime while on duty and that men were likely victims than women – 44% male compared with 35% female. This is in sharp contrast to what obtains here. Female were likely victims more than male, as collaborated by Alafiatayo (1985).

Focusing on a more specific problem, Morris (1984) an expert on arson and loss control, points out that the majority of library fires are incendiary.

Most of these tend to be set by young males. The need for proper protection was stressed. The advantages and disadvantages of automated fire suppression system are discussed, as are the various options available to libraries. Special systems most appropriate for rare and special collections are discussed. Jam (2000) conducted a study on fire disaster in tertiary libraries in Benue state. The study found out that fire destroyed library materials worth over N20 million and almost all the fires were caused by arsonists. He was of the opinion that the libraries gave little or no attention to fire disasters and had no contingency plan for it. He made recommendations. Unlike Morris, quoted earlier, he was neither specific on who the arsonists were nor specific on the contingency plan.

WHO ARE THE CRIMINALS?

Those who had been identified run the gamut beginning with outsiders and then insiders, Ratcliff (1999) identified students, professors, staff members and librarians. For instance, the University of New Hampshire thief was a graduate student, at the University of Georgia, a professor of history and a former rare book librarian, were apprehended; the head of special collection was the thief at Boston College. The case of missing books at George Washington University involved the University librarian himself. In Newcastle upon Tyne, the thief was a visiting research scholar. , In Cambridge, a research student stole oriental manuscript of great value from various libraries in the University. All these echoes the views of Mason (1975) whom states 'Bona fide researchers, students and faculty members have been thieves, and con artists posing as scholars, librarians, archivists and even clergymen have been caught stealing. There is strong evidence that many other major theft involved insiders'.

In case of University of Calabar, Edem (1998)

identified staff connivance and negligence as contributory factors to theft of books while some staffs were suspected. The arsonists identified to be responsible for fire in College of Education Library Katsina-Ala were students.

Bean (1992) reported gender and age factors: male offenders out number female offenders. That the peak age for offenders is 16 while the peak age group is 15 – 18, followed by that of 18 –21 and then 21 – 24. Once past the age of 30, the numbers of offenders drop dramatically. But there is also a slight 'hiccup' in the mid to late 50s offenders age group which records a slight increase. The reason for this is not yet fully understood and will need detailed research.

The implications for the university libraries are disheartening considering the fact that the student population falls within 16-30 years of age with higher concentration between 16-22 years while the staff especially academic and senior non-academic fall within 40-55 years, age distortion and false declaration of age notwithstanding.

WHAT CAUSES CRIMES IN LIBRARIES?

Causes of crimes in libraries are linked to risk factors and some bodies of theories as earlier discussed were used to explain the origins of crime.

Lincoln (1984) identified a number of risk factors that may facilitate crime in libraries. Chief among these is the ease of access. This view was collaborated by Ratchcliff (1999) and Alokun (1993). The Nigerian university libraries have ease of access and are one of most serious risk factor.

Another risk factor is the schedules of libraries, which facilitate crime. Often the library is the only place open after-dark or on weekends. The late night hours can be particularly problematic.

Another risk factor is valuable and easily sold items including books,

A-V equipment and materials etc. Other risk factors include high proportion of young patrons. Their presence in the library represents risk factors. Then lack of security measures is an additional risk factor. All these risk factors are present in the university libraries in Nigeria.

Oche (2000) identified reasons for crime in the library. They include. Introduction of new courses, Inadequate reading tables and chairs, inadequate availability of books and other information sources, absence of photocopying services, inadequate staff members.

Alokun (1993) attributed library crime to criminal impulse, laziness, financial constrain, erratic power supply and security deficiency

WHAT ARE THE SOLUTIONS?

Many authors gave many and varied solutions to the problem of crime in libraries. Taole (2000) offered the following: Installing electronic security systems, which Griffith (1978) claimed reduced library theft by up to 88 percent. Bahr (1984) who supported this recommendation wrote a comprehensive article on electronic security system, which begins with a brief historical review of the development and use of electronic detection systems. . This suggestion is possible in the Nigerian university libraries.

Taole ((2000) also recommended closed/restricted access that Edem (1998) also recommended. The free right of access poses serious strains on library system but in my view it is not the best solution. Users should have free access to the library materials. Some recommended the use of security guards. Their jobs will be to patrol the library and to check on people leaving the library.

Kirkpatrick (1984) writing from the psychological perspective maintained that crime control requires librarians to use learning principles of behaviour to their own advantage. The most popular way in which this is done at present seems to be by way of aversive techniques. Signs explicitly conveying the legal penalties for crime should be frequently posted on the library bulletin boards and other various ways to convey the message that library crime is onerous and will not be tolerated. Aversive techniques call for actual threatened punishment when rules are violated.

From the sociological perspective, certain library practices can be altered to better accommodate the students exposed to pressures of the system. Library hours may be extended. Photocopying machines installed and so on.

Boss (1984) recommended a practical and systematic security audit which can be adopted by university libraries in Nigeria.

"Insurance" also comes into play in the issue of security (Ungarelli 1984 and Parson, 1992). A significant portion of Ungarelli's article deals with insurance options and available packages including attention to rare and art items.

Parson gave an insight on many facets of insurance cover, which impinge on the responsibility of the librarian. As the role of libraries and that of the librarian change, so does the need to consider problems, catastrophes, and difficulties, which might befall the premises, the property, the public, the staff and the liabilities, which attach. According to him, when the risks have been assessed, it is possible to transfer many of them by purchasing insurance. Parson went further to identify areas of common interest to libraries. They include: damage to buildings, equipments, stock and services, interruption, theft, loss of money, theft by employee, personal accident, and employers' liability. Unfortunately, librarians still hold the view that insurance and loss prevention are expensive luxuries.

Parker's (1984) treatment of statutory protection begins with the suggestion that library specific status may be counter productive. Illustration of strength and weaknesses of several status are presented, suggestions for coordinating activities with law enforcement and court officials are followed by a comparison of weak and strong statutes. A thorough analysis of legislation provides a valuable reference for librarians.

Faulkner-Brown (1992) discussed the role of architecture in security and crime prevention in libraries. He stated that library buildings should be secured, to control the behaviour of all users (including staff) and to check and control criminal tendencies. He recommended close cooperation between the librarian and the architect bearing in mind security features and facts, which go a long way towards the successful resolution of the increasingly difficult problems presented by

crime and insecurity in libraries. He gave eight varying examples (case studies), which indicated the result of careful cooperation between the architecture and the librarian and show the relationship between entrances supervision and other security consideration.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Wide ranges of issues relating to library crime and security have been discussed in this paper. The article gave an overview of crime in libraries worldwide including Nigeria. The criminals were identified by status and age. In discussing the causes of library crimes, certain risk factors were identified and, certain theories that help to explain crime and its origin were discussed. Solutions from the point of view of other researchers and scholars were given. There is no doubt in the author's mind that crime and security are major issue in libraries. It has an all-embracing theme in librarianship today and I apologize for leaving so much detail out since it is only a journal article.

The extent of hidden crime in the library is perceived to be great if not greater than in the outside world. Crimes against humanity, against other readers, whether of theft or mutilation shows there are no limits to the forms or type of criminal actions that can be taken. Add these to the amount of verbal abuse offered to staff, which is often threatening and intimidating, and we get some idea of the type of problem the libraries now face. I have tried, in this article, to do more than outline some of the obvious examples and also touching on the possible solutions. May I emphasize that libraries can no longer see themselves separate from the larger world but recognize that their problems are shared problems-part and related to all public service industries. We may regret this change and try to avoid recognizing it, but once recognized, we may them be able to begin to put it right.

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