Mutilation of Information Resources by Patrons in Academic Libraries In Delta State

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Abstract

This study investigated the mutilation of information resources by patrons in academic libraries in Delta State Nigeria using descriptive survey design. The population was 246,431 information resources which comprises academic libraries in Delta State Nigeria. The 7513 information resources in academic libraries in Delta State Nigeria were used as sample of the study and systematic sampling technique was used for the study. Personal observation check list was the instrument used for the study. The study set to ascertain the types of mutilation and the extent serial materials are mutilated. Thus, every 10th serial was selected from the shelves and observed for mutilation. Findings revealed that that there are different types of mutilation of information resources in the academic libraries of Delta State such as torn pages, bent pages, underlined or highlighted, detached book cover, and cut out pages or cover and these mutilations occurs at varying extent to a large extent in the different academic libraries surveyed. Thus, it was concluded that mutilation of these information resources has become a threat to the existence of academic libraries in Delta State and when nothing is done against it, the library will be in comatose and non-existence. Thus, workable recommendations were made.

Keywords: Academic libraries, Information resources, mutilation, library users

1.1 Introduction

Mutilations of information resource have been on the increase in libraries all over the world and academic libraries in Nigeria are no exception (Maidabino, 2012). Academic libraries strive to provide information resources on both print and non-print materials to support the educational roles and objective of the academic community. The library, despite explosion of literature, price rise, increase in number of users, budget cuts and economic meltdown, still strive to make giant steps to acquire information resource so as to develop their collection for the satisfaction of the host community.

Library holdings are priceless hence they need to be secured and handled with care. Unfortunately, the problem of mutilation of information resource is laying waste to vital and expensive library collections throughout the country. Despite the security measure which libraries have put in place to ensure the

security of information resource, mutilation still take place.

Mutilation can be described as damage or change something so much that it is completely spoiled or ruined. Opaleke, Raji and Folorunsho (2004) defined mutilation of information resource as the damage e of library materials as a result of removal of a page of a book or any other materials which eventually render such materials useless to others. Isebe (2014) define mutilation as any act that makes materials unfits for reading either partially or completely. Similarly, Hart (2003) asserts that mutilation of information resource would include such acts as cutting pages, highlighting, underlining, making notices in margins and adding materials such as stickers or letter that are not meant to be part of the materials. Complementing this Maidaine (2012) noted that the major form of mutilation of library and information resources are tearing of book pages, writing on the pages books and marking of book content which could all temper the actual subject matter of the information materials. Adomi (2008) defined mutilation of information resources the deliberate removal of pages from library materials. Usually this occurs when a delinquent user is interested in a particular part of a document.

Mutilation is the act of destroying or removal of an essential part of library materials as to render it useless. These could be as a result of bending of corner of paper or inserting pencil or biro into pages, opening of books back to back and tearing of relevant pages (Akor, 2013). Mutilation distorts the information content of information resources. Information resources, on the other hand, are library materials. Academic libraries, on another hand, encompass research libraries, Baccalaureate, Masters and Doctoral degrees granting institutions, junior and community colleges, and distance learning programs of higher education (American Library Association, 2019). Academic libraries work together with other members of their institutional communities to participate in, support, and achieve the educational mission of their institutions by teaching the core competencies of information literacy - the abilities involved in identifying an information need, accessing needed information, evaluating, managing, and applying information, and understanding the legal, social, and ethical aspects of information use.

Mutilation has hampered the management of serials and periodicals in the library. Luke (2012) noted that the abuse of periodicals is a complex problem with no easy solution. One of the many mutilations discovered by Luke is the removal of pages from journals. These journals were basically in the fields of pure science and applied science. Could it be because science materials are limited in supply yet high in demand? Ugaz and Resnick, (2008) have observed that in some libraries, core medical text are integrated with other non- circulating reference materials in a prime location accessible both to client services (pubic services) staff and library users. Perhaps, lack of free access to such material can increase mutilation of core science materials. Nevertheless, Perez (2009) has concluded that the problem of periodical mutilation was widespread and is experience in almost all college and university libraries. Sadly, academic libraries were most vulnerable kind of library to periodical mutilation.

No doubt, mutilations of information resources of all categories have always presented a problem for academic libraries actualization of their goals and objectives. Mutilation or malicious damage against books is difficult to combat because the risk of getting caught is very low, while the likelihood of success is high. Mutilation robs users of library materials (Cuddy & Marchok, 2000). It frustrates library users and their right

to information. It is chronic library problem. Isebe (2012) states that the offenders are difficult to apprehend, while first- hand evidence against them is not easy to come by.

Pederson cited in Maidabino (2012) study examines students' perception of the problem of mutilation of information resource and penalties. One of the most important conclusions is that students felt that the library would be or is a very easy place from which to steal. This belief could be altered. Most students recognised that mutilation of information resource is a crime. On the contrary, Salaam and Onifade (2010) studies student perception and attitude to vandalism in the university library. Sallaam and Onifade found that majority of the respondents saw mutilation as a form of academic self- survival and they did not at it. Evidently, some library users do not see anything wrong with mutilation of information resource. Yet some others feel disgusted at their colleagues' selfishness for mutilating information resources as evident in Hart (2003) study.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Each year, libraries lose large amounts of valuable materials and information resource through mutilation. It has been observed by the researcher that loss of information resource through mutilation which seriously affect effective library services in academic libraries. Mutilation threatens to reduce the number and value of information resources in the library. Moreover, most of these valuable materials are already out of print, making the possibility of replacing them difficult.

Information resources are acquired, processed and made available to patrons to meet the information needs of staff and students for teaching, learning and research. A lot of scarce fund is committed to the purchase of the information resources. With this economic recession, it is always very difficult to replace damaged or lost information resource. Hence it becomes a problem meeting the information needs of users. Therefore, this study seeks to determine the extent of mutilation of information resources in academic libraries in Delta State

1.3 Objective of the Study

The main objective of the study is to determine the mutilation of information resources in academic libraries in delta state. The specific purposes of the study are to:
1. Determine the various types of mutilation of information resources in academic libraries in Delta State.
2. Determine the extent of mutilation of serials in academic libraries in Delta State

2.1 Literature Review

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The Routine Activity Theory provides a theoretical framework for this study. The Routine activity theory is used because the theory provides insight into the causes and nature of mutilation of library materials that occurs in the academic library. It provides explanation on situations of crimes.

Routine activity theory is a theory propounded by Marcus Felson and Lawrence E. Cohen in 1999.The theory is based on the assumption that crime (mutilation of library materials) can be committed by anyone that has the opportunity. The theory also states that victims (academic libraries) are given choice on whether to be victims mainly not placing themselves in situations where crime can be committed against them. At its heart is the idea that in the absence of effective control, offenders will prey upon attractive targets. Mutilation in library will take place where handlers are absent or weak according to (Felson, 2002).

The Routine Activity theory supports and provides a background for this study in

that mutilation of library and information resources often occur in the absence of effective control especially on the part of libraries and security personnel in the library.

The theory also portrays mutilation of materials as a library crime which occurs as the convergence of the following three elements motivated offender (delinquent user), potential target library and information resources/ materials and unguarded access (academic libraries) (Felson 2002). Unguarded access was also referred to as absence of a capable guardian as in this case a librarian or library personnel. The theory, specifically states that macro social causes do not play as big a role in the causation of library crimes as personal lifestyle does.

Morrow (2013) explains that the general lifestyle of an individual plays an important part in the definition of routine activity theory. For instance, if a library user has been exposed to criminal behavior in his/her everyday lifestyle, the higher the likelihood that the library user may mutilate a library material especially when library personnel are not security conscious and leave library materials unguarded.

2.3 Various Types of Mutilation in Academic Libraries

Mutilation of library materials have become a menace that has left a deep scar on the quality of information service rendered to library users. This is because library materials are mutilated in different ways. For instance, Teye (2012) noted that there are many books worn out and mutilated- some beyond repairs while other needs rehabilitation before they can be reused. Evidence of mutilated books were torn pages, cut out pictures and photographs, detached book covers, soiled and defaced books. Also in Senya (2004) work, he cites lack of resources, poor funding, poverty, and selfishness on the part of students, security lapses and photocopying as

some factors which cause mutilation of books in the library.

Worthy of mention is that, mutilation in academic libraries becomes rampant towards the end of the semester when students are preparing for examinations. In most cases, mutilated materials become more or less useless as some chapters or parts of some materials or texts are removed. No wonder, Ogunyade (2005) points out that mutilation witnessed in Nigerian academic libraries is costly and disruptive to the library and its users. Agbo (2000) also noted that book mutilation has adversely affected the services of the library. Librarians consider mutilation as a threat to intellectual property and have seen it as a tremendous challenge to the library profession worldwide. Indeed, libraries have realized that book and journal mutilation is a growing problem that simply does not go away. It is costly and disruptive for both libraries and library users. Book mutilation is certainly not new developments of our time. Handwriting or marks in and tearing or removal of pages from books can all be forms of vandalism or mutilation. In view of this, stated that mutilation has adversely affected the services of the library. It has led to a situation where considerable numbers of books have been withdrawn from the shelves, thus placing students who may not have their sources to purchase the needed books on the horns of dilemma and frustration. Imagine what happens when a student of low socio economic status comes to the library and discover that the book he or she is looking for has been mutilated.

Obviously, the phenomenon of mutilation as a library crime in Nigerian academic libraries has in one way or the other, affected the quality and quantity of books in these libraries. It depletes the meagre book votes (financial allocation) and, to a large extent, weakens and cast as person on the professional integrity of library staff who has

often been accused of stealing or conniving with these academic criminals. Ifidon (2000) in his own opinion stated, Mutilation in libraries is a menace that has persisted, and it is indeed a global problem, the worsening state of libraries in Nigeria appears to have aggravated its intensity and the consequent detrimental impact.

More so, mutilation acts as a limitation of access to information which poses a threat to knowledge pursuit and exchange. For the administration, the problem also poses great financial consequences. More damaged library materials mean more monetary expenses. The costs of repair and replacement become a necessary additional expense for the library which, in turn, further strains the already belt-tight book funds for acquisition of new library materials. The eventual outcome is also a lower quality of library services. Hence, Isebe (2015) concluded that the rate at which the library materials are mutilated is reflected in the records kept by the libraries. These materials are found to be mostly textbooks, which the users usually consult during examination periods.

Furthermore, Carol (2004) opines that some people just like to write notes in books they've borrowed, use a highlighting pen, or annotate a text to help them work through a performance. Some people mutilate books to convey a personal message of political, religious, or social belief. Some people slash up books because they cannot be bothered to use the photocopier. Some people do it because they want to be the only one in their class who was able to read that chapter before the final exam.

Below is a catalogue of some types of mutilation of library and information resources:

I. *Tearing of pages of Books, Reference Materials and Periodicals:* This the most common form of mutilation of library materials. Mutilation through tearing of pages is not the only means but also tearing of plates, pictures, maps, tables and diagrams from documents. Some readers, according to Senyah (2004), have the itch to tear out pictures of nude man and women, or erotic letterpress. The material lifted may be wanted for scrap books or to round out holdings in special fields of interest or more likely in the case of students, to use in connection with classroom assignments, term papers, theses. This practice indicates the moral reasoning and misbehavior of the users. Mutilation of pages and such practice are prevalent not only in school, university, public, special libraries but also in college libraries where highly intellectual and research scholars are located.

ii. *Underlining and Highlighting Text:* Library users sometimes mutilate library materials by writing, underlining and highlighting text in books and journals with pencils, Biro's and markers. Explaining the effect of this, Isebe (2015) wrote that this pencil, pen and crayon marking and writing can lead to the defacement of book and journal pages. It can also lead to indelible or tenacious marks on books and information materials.

iii. *Bending of Books and Other Information Materials:* Bending of books or opening books wider than one ought to can lead to splitting of sewing thread or glues along spine and compression of covering materials, leading to complete breakdown of the structure. Bending pages also weakens the paper.

iv. *Piling Books up haphazardly or Too High:* This is usually done by library users and library staff. Piling books up

haphazardly or too high can lead to damage to bindings and increased risk of books falling, leading to detached covers and broken sewing (Bendix, 2010).

Other type of mutilation as given by Bendix (2010) are using post-it notes to mark leaves which leads to stain and sticky residues causing long-term damage, especially to leaves; Inserting slips of paper to mark leaves but not removing them after use, thereby causing chemical damage to leaves. Unless slips are acid free and lignin-free, dirt ingress causing staining and increased risk of mould/insects as well as distortion of book structure.

2.4 Mutilation of Serials in Academic Libraries

Academic libraries usually have rich collections of various information materials (journals, magazines, books, reference works, newspapers, government publications, reports, theses /dissertations, database, CD ROMS, art works, photos, manuscripts, etc.) covering area of subjects to serve its academic community, which includes lecturers, students, non-teaching staff and researchers. It plays an important role in the life of the library users to a large extent, guiding students and faculty at the reference desk, instructing library research sessions, and developing library collections (Eruvwe, Akpojotor, & Okonoko, 2015).

Serials, on the other hand, are periodicals with distinct titles issued in successive parts and meant to be published indefinitely. Examples are journals Articles in journals may often be useful either to augment the information that one has already obtained from books or to act as a substitute when the information cannot be found in books. Serials are published regularly they often contain more up to-date information. Examples of serials in academic libraries are journals, newspapers, magazines. Journals are information materials used for communicating research finding by scholars. It reports latest development in the field, journals are good source of primary information they are published regularly, usually quarterly or monthly. This is why they are seen as periodic publication that contains number of articles. Aina (2004), states that journals report the latest development in the field and are usually produced by a specialist society or an association. Journals are one library materials prone to mutilation because of its quality /feature of currency and it is not allowed to be borrowed out of the library, users may be tempted to tear pages they need in the journal.

Furthermore, Byunn, and Lau (n.d) found that at the University of Memphis Library (UML), much concern has been given to the problems of mutilation of library periodicals/ serials. It is not infrequent to find that periodical articles are ripped off, or that even the entire issue is missing. As a result, the periodical departments have to put some heavily demanded books, current issues of magazines, and newspapers behind their information desks. When patrons need them, they need to go to the desks to sign a request slip for use. Similarly, Byunn, and Lau (n.d) found that three items are most often mutilated which include periodicals, rare manuscripts, and books. Furthermore, the mutilation of periodicals and books in academic libraries is extensively documented in library literature. Gouke and Murfin(2008) theorized that academic libraries were the most kind of library periodically mutilated. They concluded that an electronic security system would reduce the rate of periodical mutilation.

Evidently, periodical materials are the most likely materials that are mutilated (Bello, 2006). Also, Mwantimwa (n.d) carried

out a study and found that the most vulnerable materials to mutilation are books on high demand , followed by newspapers, periodicals and pamphlets which are all serials.

Hendrikin Akor (2013) stated that most academic libraries suffer from this debilitating disease (mutilation of serials and periodicals). The quiet but insidious mutilation of their periodical collections not only drains badly needed financial resources but also frustrates and frequently infuriates their patrons. Thus the magnitude of the problem is such mutilation would lead increased frustration and anger on part of library staff and innocent patrons.

Mwantimwa (n.d) provided the likely reason for mutilation of serials in libraries. It was found that the main reason for newspapers, periodicals and pamphlets mutilation is that they are strictly used only in the library. According to the respondents, other library materials such as magazines, maps, manuscripts and thesis were not very vulnerable to mutilation at University of Dares Salaam library due to the small number of users who use these materials. Mwamtimwa also claimed that the case of newspapers mutilation at Sokoine National Agricultural Library (SNAL), the external users are answerable for most mutilation.

3.1 Research Methods

The descriptive survey research design is used for the study. This survey research design was adopted based on the fact that only a portion of all the information resources in academic libraries would be selected. The study was carried out in academic libraries in Delta State. The population of this study comprises all the information resources in the academic libraries in Delta state. The population is 246,431. Balloting was used to select the five out of the nine academic libraries in Delta State, Nigeria. The sample comprised 7, 513 information resources in five academic libraries. The systematic sampling technique was used also in this study to select the information resources from the shelves. The sampling interval for this study therefore was every 10th information resource on the shelf. The data required for this study was collected using personal observations.

The choice of observation is because the instrument would enable the researcher see for itself, the extent of mutilation of information resources that -would otherwise be impossible with any other research instrument. The personal observations were done in all the five selected academic libraries in the state. The observation would focus on the title of information material mutilated, the category of information resources (serials materials, reference materials, social science materials and science materials), the nature of mutilation (torn pages, underlined or highlighted text, bent backs, detached book cover, cut off pages or pictures etc). Data obtained in the study was analyzed using frequency counts and simple percentage and were presented in charts.

4.1 Results and Data Analysis

Research Question One: What are the various types of mutilation of information resources in academic libraries in Delta State?

Table 1: The various types of mutilation of information resources in academic libraries in Delta State

S/N	Types of Mutilation		Percent (%)	FUPE	Percent (%)	DSPO	Percent (%)	DSPOZ	Percent (%)	FTCA	Percent (%)	Total number of Resources	Total Percent (%)
1	Torn pages	227	13.8	104	19.8	130	18.2	133	17.7	218	14.3	812	15.7
2	Bent pages	654	39.7	93	17.7	154	21.5	187	24.9	586	38.4	1674	32.4
3	Underlined or highlighted	564	34.3	219	41.6	294	41.1	299	39.8	531	34.8	1907	36.9
4	Detached book cover	107	6.5	64	12.2	78	10.9	75	10	102	6.7	426	8.3
5	Cut out pages or cover	94	5.7	46	8.7	60	8.3	57	7.6	89	5.8	346	6.7
	Total	**1646**	**100**	**526**	**100**	**716**	**100**	**751**	**100**	**1526**	**100**	**5165**	**100**

Table 1 shows the various types of mutilation of information resources in academic libraries in Delta State. The results revealed that there are different types of mutilation of information resources in the academic libraries of Delta State such as torn pages, bent pages, underlined or highlighted, detached book cover, and cut out pages or cover. There are 15.7% of torn pages in the libraries, 32.4% bent pages, 36.9% underlined or highlighted pages, 8.3% detached pages, and 6.7% cut out pages or cover.

Objective Two: find out the extent of mutilation of serial information resources in academic libraries in Delta State

Table 2: Extent of mutilation of serial information resources in academic libraries in Delta State

S/N	Tertiary Institutions	Torn Pages	Bent Pages	Underlined Or Highlighted	Detached Book Cover	Cut out Pages or pictures	Total Mutilated	Total % of Mutilation
1	CEA	60	183	150	27	24	444	32.7
2	FUPLE	27	20	49	18	12	126	9.3
3	DSPOU	32	32	68	20	15	167	12.3
4	DSPG	27	24	55	17	12	135	9.9
5	FTCA	65	206	161	27	28	487	35.8
	Total	**211**	**465**	**483**	**109**	**91**	**1359**	**100**

From table 2 above, CEA has 32.7% mutilated information resources, FUPLE has 9.3% mutilated serial information resources, and DSPOU has 12.3% mutilated serial information resources. On the other hand, DSPO has 9.9% serial mutilated information resources while FTCA has 35.8% serial mutilated information resources. The results implied that the highest mutilation of serial information resources in the universities, underlined or highlighted information materials, which is 35.8%.

5.1 Discussions of the Major Findings

The different types of mutilation of information resources in the academic libraries of Delta State are torn pages, bent pages, underlined or highlighted, detached book cover, and cut out pages or cover. There are 15.7% of torn pages in the libraries, 32.4% bent pages, 36.9% underlined or highlighted pages, 8.3% detached pages, and 6.7% cut out pages or cover. In line with these findings, Teye (2012) found that there are many books worn out and mutilated- some beyond repairs while other needs rehabilitation before they can be reused. Evidence of mutilated books were torn pages, cut out pictures and photographs, detached book covers, soiled and defaced books. In affirmation, Isebe (2015) found that the rate at which the library materials are mutilated is reflected in the records kept by the libraries. These materials are found to be mostly textbooks, which the users usually consult during examination periods.

More so, the highest mutilation of serial information resources in the universities, information materials were mutilated in the libraries is 35.8%. In agreement with this finding, Bello (2006) found that serial materials like periodical materials are the most likely materials that are mutilated. Also, Mwantimwa (n.d) affirmed that the most vulnerable materials to

mutilation are books on high demand, followed by newspapers, periodicals and pamphlets which are all serials. Akor (2013) attested that most academic libraries suffer from this debilitating disease (mutilation of serials and periodicals).

Conclusion

It is based on the findings of this study that it is concluded that torn pages, bent pages, underlined or highlighted, detached book cover, and cut out pages or cover are the types of mutilation information resource in academic libraries where 35.8% mostly mutilated are serial information resources. On the other hand, 22.6% are social science information resources, 32.3% science information resources, and 41.5% are mostly reference information resources.

Implications of the Study

Information resources are very important in academic libraries in Delta State because it has provided solutions to many problems research in academic libraries. However, the mutilation of these information resources has become a threat to the existence of libraries in Delta State and when nothing is done against it, the library will be in comatose and non-existence. It is against this note that it becomes imperative to make recommendations to fight against mutilations in the libraries.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following are recommended:

1. There is need for librarians to educate library users, give proper library orientation periodically for the users to acquaint the importance of books in education and avoid mutilations.
2. Library management and librarians should carry out a sensitization programme in libraries to make the library users understand that mutilation

could be an obstacle to the services rendered by libraries.

3. Library management in collaboration with the school management should ensure multiple copies of books should be placed in circulation so as to meet the high demands of library user.

4. In-service training should be organized by the library management once in a while to non-professionals librarians so as to help reduce the mutilation of information resources in libraries.

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