

**COMBATING BOOK THEFT AND VANDALISM IN SPECIAL LIBRARIES: FOCUS ON ENUGU STATE UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (ESUT) MEDICAL LIBRARY, PARKLANE, ENUGU**

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**ABSTRACT**

For the purpose of this study, it is assumed that library users exist in ESUT, a medical library. These users cause damages to the library materials. The study covers the extent to which theft and vandalism have affected the information materials of the library under study. The population of this study was all the 11 members of staff (both professional and non-professional) of the medical library. The questionnaire was the instrument for data collection. Data were analyzed using mean scores and standard deviation. It was realized that theft and vandalism have a very serious effect on the services of the library under study. suggestions and recommendations were made to improve the security arrangement of the library and to improve and protect information materials from being mutilated or vandalized in ESUT, a medical library.

**Keywords:** Theft, Vandalism, Special Library, Medical Library

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Librarians have been battling with the problem of security of library resources, which resulted from man-made practices such as theft, mutilation, (vandalism) fire, etc., which renders library practices and services ineffective, inefficient and insecure. Theft and vandalism of library materials are a universal phenomenon and have adversely affected the success and growth of libraries all over the world. This leads to frustration on the part of the clientele since the library books and other information sources needed at a particular point in time will not be found in the library. Therefore, there is the need for an understanding of the factors that are attributable to book theft and vandalism in special libraries so that the security arrangement currently in these kinds of libraries could be improved.

Apparently, the issue of collection security is a growing concern for different kinds of libraries including the “special libraries”, which is our major concern for this study: Collection security is a formidable obstacle to information access and use and such acts are serious problems that result in users’ dissatisfaction. Security issues in libraries include theft, vandalism, mutilation,

damages and disaster, over-borrowing or delinquent borrowers and purposefully displacing arrangement of materials. Theft and vandalism of books can be traced down to 539BC in Egypt when the Persian conquerors removed rolls of papyrus from the library of Ramses II. Also, around 41BC, during the middle ages, library books and materials were chained-locked to prevent theft (Constaintion, 1995 in Edom, 2002).

Now, the new Encyclopedia Britannica defined theft as unauthorized removal of the library materials or equipment from the library premises while vandalism is the damage of library collections, furnishing, or accidental, usually motivated by anger or malice on the part of the perpetrator. Mutilation and theft in libraries is a global problem, which is an anti-social; unlawful act, and an offense, the perpetrators can be subjected to legal punishment by assessing and using information materials from that library. Theft and mutilation of information materials or resources are serious security issues that need urgent attention. Vandalism entails defacement or damages of library materials/ collections. These include; removal of book pages, articles from periodicals, illustrations, and whole-text blocks from monographs. Theft and vandalism, defacement, arson, verbal and physical abuse, harassment, and other criminal activities are problems regularly encountered by staff working in libraries and information centers. According to Okoye-okonta (1981 in Umenwa, 2010), a study of some selected libraries in Nigeria, indicated that theft ranked highest followed by mutilation or vandalism among the security problems encountered by these libraries, and of course, it is still the case to date. Thus, one of the five laws of Ranganathan (1931), on librarianship which postulates that 'Books are for use' is greatly hampered by mutilation or vandalism thereby reducing the quality and quantity of library services.

Aguolu and Aguolu (2002), described the university library as "the heart" of the university, the most indispensable agency of the University Teaching and Research. The importance of a well-stocked library cannot be over-emphasized. It portrays the image of the organization/institution and its contributions to quality education as a center of learning and research. Despite the health information roles of medical libraries, their resources are still threatened by criminal activities like theft, willful damage to public property, vandalism, among others. From the medieval period till today, librarians and other library staff are still worried and battling the issues. Aguolu reiterates that both theft and vandalism of library books have been the concern of librarians since the invention of the printing press and the emergence of libraries. Practices like chaining of books, closed access, recopying of texts, and penalties for library delinquencies points to the prevalence of cases of theft and damages of library materials which engaged the efforts of librarians to minimize or completely eradicate the problem. Academic libraries have lost most of their valuable resources either through theft or mutilation, and continue loss of information resources is an ill wind that blows no library any good

Ifidon and Ifidon (2007), also stated that theft and vandalism date back to the 15th century when books were chained so that they could not be illegally removed when night watchmen and grills were used in the library rooms. Based on the seriousness of these two problems, developed nations make library policies on theft and vandalism of library materials. For instance, the

University of South Carolina Beau Fort (2006), has it in the library policies that all library users are subject to state laws regarding theft, damages, and failure to return borrowed library materials. Universities in the third world countries which Nigeria is among, formulated library rules and regulations in order to monitor the conduct and check unwholesome practices of library users.

## 1.1 Purpose of the Study

**The purpose of this study is;**

1. To ascertain the extent to which theft and vandalism have affected materials in ESUT medical library, PARKLANE, Enugu.
2. To identify the information materials that are vulnerable to theft and vandalism in special libraries especially ESUT Medical library PARKLANE, Enugu.

## Research Question

1. What extent has theft and vandalism affected materials in the medical library?
2. What information materials are vulnerable to theft and vandalism in the Medical Library?

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Theft of library resources is among the serious challenges facing medical libraries in Nigeria it has created a very big problem that is nearing the epidemic stage as it cost medical institutions money and time to replace, reproduce, recopy and rebound stolen resources from the library. Theft of library resources can be defined as the act of removing library materials illegally from the library holdings. Afolobi (1993), confirmed this claim by stating that theft poses the greatest threat to academic libraries. Similarly, Nwosu (2000), identifies theft of library materials as one of the negative behavior traits of library users that result in depletion of library stock and denial of legitimate rights of others to use the materials. She describes the act as one that shakes the foundation of the library as a collection of books for use. Edom (2002), opined that book theft is a perennial problem facing libraries as libraries have lost most of their valuable resources. Sakari (2011), regards theft of library resources as an ill-motivational act, as a cankerworm that poses great challenges to university libraries and I guess we could refer to the college of medicine library, Parklane, Enugu as a partial university library since it is attached to the main university library in ESUT, Agbani.

Still on the theft of library materials, Uwakwe (2003) in Umenwa, (2010), joins to describe theft as the illegal removal of items belonging to another person without the use of violence she continued that the materials could be a book or non-book materials, belonging to the library or personal items like money, handbag, textbook, handset, etc. The theft of library resources is done by the user in many ways, Nwato (2003), described the various book theft devices in academic libraries such as; users concealing books in their clothes before wading through the windows. The author went further to state that the user also walks out of the library door with the book

when the security is not alert, some also volunteered to be searched with concealed library material. He continued that some users also make use of illegal date due slips while others collide with library security. Afolabi (1993), also added the use of chemicals to clean off library ownership stamps in books jacket cover and preliminary pages of books so that books cannot be identified. Also, in agreement with the finding above, Oche (2000), Oyesiku (2004), and Olofinsawe (2007), all reported various methods users device in stealing library materials.

Another great problem facing libraries in high incidence is the vandalism of documents, books, and periodicals. From the criminal defense lawyer Nolo (2021), vandalism is the willful destruction or damages of property in a manner that defaces, mars, or otherwise adds a physical blemish that diminishes the property's value. It also means an action involving deliberate destruction or damages to public or private property. The term includes property damages such as graffiti and defacement directed towards any property without the permission of the owner. Vandalism of library resources has to do with the damaging, defacing, and cutting off of some important parts of books and no books materials. It makes library resources look worthless and something of a second-hand value used and dumped. Nwosu (2000), describes vandalism as the intentional damage of books. The value of reading materials and their life is shortened through vandalism as the information contained in there is incomplete. Through the vandalism of information materials, important information has been lost from the library resources.

The vandalism of library collections has been reported by many researchers (Lorenzen 1996; Bello 1998; Ajegbogun 2003). Vandalism occurs when users knowingly tear, mark, or otherwise damage or destroy materials. Lorenzen (1996), observes that book vandalism takes many forms, ranging from underlying and highlighting text, tearing and removal of pages, and tampering with the content. Lorenzen identified several causes of vandalism in libraries, including:

- Users' dissatisfaction with unfamiliarity with library services.
- A lack of knowledge of replacement cost and time
- A lack of concern for the needs of others
- Few users think of vandalism in the library as a crime

Virtually all resources are vulnerable to vandalism. Nwogu (2002) agrees with the point by citing the experience of the Imo state branch of the National Library, where books and other print numbering more than five hundred were discovered vandalized by students and other library users between 2007-2009. The author also cited evidence from the Federal polytechnic libraries among those who have also encountered such severe damage of information materials, in the name of vandalism. He warned that what is imminent if not checked in our libraries is perpetual vandalism. The libraries whose materials are either stolen or vandalized have been robbed of their intellectual wealth. The library users who are denied access to valuable information materials have also been prevented from making use of their bonafide intellectual

property, it is not even better for the user thief or for the vandal if caught because his or her image has been dented, the institutions who fund the library is not exempted from the pain as it constitutes a drain in its budget. Bean (1992), Utor (2004), and Nwosu (2000) are all of the views

that the use of a modern technological device like closed-circuit television (CCTV) is ideal to safeguard the library resources. The University of South Carolina Beau ford (2003), Homestead library (2002), and Manitowoc public library (2008) rolled out a catalog of policies aimed at preventing book theft and vandalism.

The Medical library houses information materials on different medical fields. For example; different textbooks on General medicine, surgery, ophthalmology, internal medicine, gynecology and obstetrics, pediatrics, dentistry, pharmacology, therapeutics, etc. even reference materials are found in medical libraries too. Also available are medical dictionaries and different encyclopedias on different aspects of medicine, then different atlases on human bodies.

According to a research article, written by Okeke et al. (2017), "information materials and services available for medical libraries users, using about five medical libraries in Enugu. Here is some of the information materials used in these libraries understudy:

- Medical dictionaries
- Encyclopedias on word, medicine, drug, injection, pharmacy, psychiatrists, Britannica.
- WHO formulary
- Abstracts on prostaglandin, subject abstract
- Catalogue; book, union, and electronic catalogs.
- Maps. Charts and Atlas.
- Serials: newspapers, journals on (aliment, WHO journals, TB, HIV/AIDS, HPV, infectious diseases, foreign, diabetes, surgeries, orthopedic & trauma, etc.)
- Pamphlets
- Different medical textbooks on core courses and subjects.

Apparently, print materials are not the only information resources accessible in today's libraries regardless of the type of library it is as the incorporation of ICT (information and communication technology) into the library system and its services (automation) has changed everything. According to Okeke et al. (2017), these are some of the electronic resources which are very vital in today's libraries most especially the medical libraries:

- Access medicine: a collection of books on educational and clinical medicine.
- AISSLINE: this is available through Medline and contains AIDS/HIV information.
- Medline-CD-ROM: this is the world's largest medical health database. It is a computer system that gives the librarians access to a vast amount of data stored in a computer at the National Library of medicine. Here the librarians use a computer terminal to obtain information from the system. Medline is even better accessed electronically\ online; but the Nigerian context where power and network issues pose challenges, the CD-ROM version is highly used.
- POPLINE-CD-ROM: world largest database of family planning and related health issues.
- HINARI- Health inter network access to research initiative online: the WHO has negotiated with leading publishers in medicine/ health and over 7200 journals are now

made available to health institutions in 113 countries benefiting many health workers and researchers. It is also available online to some developing countries for teaching, research and practice.

- MD consult: this is a collection of medical books and journals.
- Pub med-online: this contains over 15 million citations from biomedical articles in medicine and life sciences journals. In pub meds, another database like Medline plus can be accessed. Plus, extensive information from the national institute of health and trusted sources on over 700 diseases and conditions.
- Topics in international health-CD-ROM: this covers various health topics.
- Clinical evidence: (from BM evidence center) clinical evidence is one of the world's most authoritative medical resources for informing treatment and improving patient care (Gavigani& Mohan 2008).
- TALC CD-ROM: This is a teaching aid at a low cost. It covers various topics.
- OVID: A collection of 12000 journals, over 500 books databases.

ELIN-Electronic library information navigator. ELIN integrates data from different publishers, databases, and e-print open achieves using a single user-friendly interface. It provides a range of full-text journals. Only those that are included in ELIN are accessible in EBSCO which is a collection of online databases of journals and other contents. Under the PERii-programme, access is provided to databases (Academic search premier, Business source premier, ERIC, Master file premier, Newspapers source, Health source nursing academic, Health source customer Edition and MEDLINE) which can be searched individually or in the group by selection.

### 3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted for the study was the descriptive survey. The area of the study is a medical library of Enugu State University of Science and Technology College of Medicine (ESUTHCOM), Park lane, Enugu. The population of the study was all the 11 Library staff of ESUTHCOM. Census sampling was used for this study. A structured questionnaire was used to elicit information from the respondents. The eleven (11) copies of the questionnaire were carefully distributed by the researchers. They explained the details where necessary to the respondents who filled and returned the same to the researchers. Data collected were analyzed and interpreted using mean and standard deviation.

### 4.0 ANALYSIS

**Research Question 1:** To what extent has theft and vandalism affected materials in the medical library?

**Table1: Mean rating of the respondent response on the extent theft and vandalism has affected materials in the Medical Library.**



S/N	Item	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
1	Textbooks	3.36	1.03	Accepted
2	Journals	2.82	.60	Accepted
3	Pamphlets	2.00	.89	Rejected
4	Pictograph	1.91	.94	Rejected
5	Charts and Drawings	1.27	.65	Rejected
6	Reference Materials	2.50	.69	Accepted
7	Leisure Materials	2.82	.60	Accepted
	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2.38</b>	<b>.77</b>	<b>Rejected</b>

shown that the respondents agreed that Medical textbooks, medical journals, reference materials, and leisure materials ranked to high extents as materials affected by theft and vandalism in the Medical Library. Meanwhile, they responded that pamphlets, charts & drawings, and pictographs are not affected by theft and vandalism.

**Research question 2:** What information materials are vulnerable to theft and vandalism?

**Table2: Mean responses on the information materials that are vulnerable to theft and vandalism.**

S/N	Item	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
8	Textbooks	3.55	.82	Accepted
9	Journals	2.82	.60	Accepted
10	Pamphlets	2.73	.91	Accepted
11	Pictograph	2.36	.81	Rejected
12	Charts and Drawings	1.73	.79	Rejected
13	Reference Materials	2.18	.75	Rejected
14	Leisure Materials	2.82	.60	Accepted
	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2.60</b>	<b>.75</b>	<b>Accepted</b>

From table 2 above, it could be deduced that the respondents agreed that Medical textbooks, medical journals, reference materials, and leisure materials are the information materials that are more vulnerable to theft and vandalism in the Medical Library. While respondents disagreed that pamphlets, pictographs, and charts & drawings are vulnerable to theft and vandalism in this library. Generally, the information materials are vulnerable to theft and vandalism in this library.

## **5.0 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

From the analyzed data, it is obvious that the ESUT, medical library has the problem of theft and vandalism in their library. This is on their physical library resources that is the print collections. And mostly, the kinds of information materials vulnerable to this menace in their library are mostly their medical textbooks, journals, and reference materials. While the pamphlets, charts and drawings, and pictographs are hardly targeted to these library thieves and vandals.

## **6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings, the researchers recommend that:

1. The Medical librarians should give orientation /user education to the users that it is in their own interest to help the library preserve books and materials since they are of use to them in carrying out their basic medical researches and learning. We cannot actually hope to cope to prevent people from stealing, mutilating, and hoarding library books. Therefore, if such is their intent, we should educate them.
2. Their attention should be paid more to medical textbooks, Medical journals, and reference materials as they are the information materials greatly affected by theft and vandalism in the Medical Library.
3. Overdue books should be pursued as quickly as possible so that they are not later overlooked and considered lost. Copies of overdue notices should be sent to the user and there is no positive response, a copy should be sent to the head of the department who should remind the user of the inconveniences he is causing to another user, and also the consequences of the act.
4. Provision should be made for photocopying services in the library. This way, there will be no need for users to tear out pages of books or periodicals. This will prohibit users from carrying out books from one library section to another. This will help prevent the mutilation of such items.
5. Policy formulation that will guild against every form of theft and vandalism should be provided and fully implemented to address security breaches. Besides this, stiff penalties should be well spelled out for dishonest users associated with theft, mutilation, illegal removal of library materials, or vandalism. Funds should be allocated to the library for the training of staff on the collection security and acquisition of more photocopying machines

## **7.0 CONCLUSION**

Theft and vandalism in medical libraries especially in ESUTHCOM, the medical library has been identified to have negative impacts on users and the library. The importance of information resources cannot be over-emphasized in the quest for knowledge and new ideas through the use of library resources. Hence, theft and vandalism should be discouraged within the library through different measures and policies. When adequate measures are taken, both the libraries and security personnel will effectively meet the information needs of others.



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