

# Book Theft as a Factor Affecting Lending Services to Students in Two State University Libraries in North-Central Nigeria

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** *This study aimed at investigating book theft as a factor affecting lending services to students in two state university libraries BSUM and IBBUL in North-Central Nigeria.*

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** *It adopted a descriptive survey design. 26,460 undergraduate students and 22 academic librarians from the two state universities formed the target population. A stratified sampling technique was used to sample 300 undergraduate students and 22 academic librarians from the two studied universities. Questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics of percentages as well as mean and standard deviation frequency.*

**Findings:** *The findings of the study revealed that the effect of book theft on lending services is on the increase and that the ways by which library materials are stolen have a negative effect on lending services.*

**Implication:** *The increase in book theft in the libraries will negate efforts of lending services and invariably diminish the rate of learning of the students with consequent poor scholarly productivity.*

**Originality:** *Once these issues are adequately addressed, it is expected that there will be a tremendous improvement on lending services to student in two state university libraries in North-Central Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** *Book theft, lending services, Undergraduates, University libraries.*

## Introduction

Human's quest to acquire ideas cannot be insatiable since the challenge to seek for more knowledge and information is always of increase. Libraries started to organise human's ideas which includes acquiring information resources, and how to access the collection. Library has maintained the lasting histories where people learn and seek for ideas. Therefore, academic society is developed to correspond library that produces literate citizens, with practical as well as theoretical knowledge. Academic library has channels of learning that supports the utilization of resources effectively and efficiently. Libraries primarily functioned as information repositories in the past but presently are institution for learning. The paradigm shift requires academic libraries to acquire library materials which serve the educational and leisure activities of their institutions Lawal-Solarin (2013). He further cited Awana that academic

libraries are libraries that belongs to postsecondary schools like polytechnics, colleges of education, advanced teachers training colleges as well as universities.

It is believe that academic libraries are set up services to enhance the research and teaching missions of its institutions particularly for users. In a nutshell, libraries in universities are to serve the need of academic institutions- provision of reference resources, provision of study areas, and provision of lending service. Furthermore, lending services of academic libraries are services rendered in issuing out library materials on loan to users in order to achieve their information needs. Library loan or library lending involved the process of lending library books and other materials to users. Circulation section is one of the major units of any library. It is described as the public service point that is normally at the gate door of libraries. The unit is responsible to provide the facilities to borrow, return borrowed books, renewal and payment of

ines. In support of this, Aina (2004) asserted that loan service is essentially a social service in which users of a library have the privilege of borrowing library materials either for reading or consultation.

Book theft is a factor that could affect lending services in library. Theft is the crime of stealing library materials from library. These resources include books, DVDs and other media from libraries. According to Ogbonyomi (2011) theft mutilation, vandalism, defacement, are crimes regularly encountered in libraries, this is because academic library housed valuable, expensive books and other information materials. Human agents' causes partial or complete loss of library resources which could either be temporarily or permanent and this is a major problem to library users because they will not be able to access resources in the library since they are stolen. These crimes could also be non-return of borrowed materials, theft and mutilation. But unfortunately, users are the offenders of this type of crimes for whom the resources are collected to serve.

According to Bello cited in Ayoung (2014), it is not only library users that commit theft in libraries, some library staff are also guilty of this crime, they remove library resources from library without any permission. Furthermore, Berlin (2006); Holt (2007); Griffiths and Krol (2009) argued that the most dangerous yet least reported offenders of security breaches is that committed by library staff who are supposed to be the caretakers of library resources and enforcers of rules and regulations. Supporting this view, Ajegbomogun (2004) stated that library staff that aid or engage in the unauthorized removal of library resources pose huge risk and leads to the loss of collections because they are hardly suspected. These crimes committed by some library staff in institution library has deprived some users from fully accessing the desired information needed for their academic pursuits. According to Akor (2013) theft in university library is not only on libraries resources, is also on materials like handbags, notebooks, keys, purses and other materials. The nature and extent of this crime varies. He further corroborates Abareh's findings which suggest that financial constraint, selfishness of library users and inadequate library materials has contributed to some of these factors. As a remedy, Griffiths and Krol

(2009) proposed the establishment of stringent measures in the recruitment of library staff.

However, it is obvious that the lending services of the state university libraries in the North Central Nigeria are needed for the students to be adequately informed. The functioning of university libraries is highly appreciated mainly when the lending services are adequate especially as majority of the students cannot afford the resources needed in their studies. Lending services in the libraries are usually affected by some factors such as book theft. Literature has revealed that for students to perform in their academic pursuits there is need for them to visit the libraries and borrow books. With so many factors affecting lending services, the situation is disturbing especially as lending services of the libraries are necessary for the student's education.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Lending services in many university libraries are usually poor because of inadequate number of information resources available in the libraries; therefore it becomes necessary for library management to protect the limited information resources from library theft and other deviant activities.

Preliminary investigation by the researchers has shown that the students in two state universities in North-Central Nigeria are faced with the challenges of borrowing or accessing the needed or right information desired and even when the information resources are obtained, they are not effectively used. One then wonders what factors are responsible for this negative situation in lending services to students in the studied universities. Therefore, this study is set to investigate the effect of book theft on lending services among undergraduates in state universities in North – Central Nigeria.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to find out the effect of book theft as a factor affecting lending services to students in two university libraries in North-Central Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

1. Determine the effect of book theft on lending services to students of the two state universities in north-central;
2. Find out the ways by which library materials are stolen by undergraduate students in the studied universities.

## Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the effect of book theft on lending services of the two state universities in North-Central Nigeria?
2. What are the ways by which library materials are stolen by undergraduate students in the two state universities?

## Literature Review

The term book theft simply means stealing of library resources from library. According to Scott (2009) stealing of library materials is a major crime in libraries of today. This crime of theft and other deviant activities really affect libraries' holdings. These crimes defaulters such as library staff and patrons pose a greater danger to libraries of old times in histories as well as today's libraries. Libraries housed very important information resources and as such are vulnerable to theft. Library managers must be aware of library crimes and should not think that there is no any misconduct in libraries because it can occur at any point in time and so they must be alert.

The reasons behind stealing library resources vary from one person to another and from one situation to another. The reasons for these ugly situations might be as thus; no fund from any source, no library security, to make profit, compulsion, alcoholic users, custodian of library materials and no options but to steal for payment of hospital bill, they steal because they have knowledge about the location of valuable items and many others. These bad attitudes spoil or damage the image of the thieves in particular. Some library resources that are at risk of theft are: computers, CD-ROMs, artifacts, reserve materials, materials in medicines, dictionaries and many others.

In Akor (2013)Nwamefor (1974) and Nwalo(2003) stated the following as the ways by which library resources are stolen:

- Thieves hide library materials under clothes and inside pockets and sneak them out.
- tearing pages off
- throwing materials through windows
- loan of books and use of date-due slip to remove materials from libraries at any time.

- taking out library materials when security is not alert.
- volunteers to be searched so that he or she might not be suspected

Furthermore, in Ebonuwele, Yaya, & Krubu(2011) Afolabi and Tefera outlined the following factors that constituted user delinquency in libraries:

- use of chemical substance to erase stamps from library materials
- remove of date due slips from books
- stealing another persons' ID card to borrow library materials
- patrons joining hands with some staff of library to borrow more books and many other

## Research Methods

The study adopted a descriptive survey design.26,460 undergraduate students and 22 academic librarians from the two state universities formed the target population. Neyman's allocation formula for proportional stratified random sampling technique was used to sample 300 undergraduate students and all the 22 academic librarians were adopted as sample size, since the population is small from the two studied universities in North-Central Nigeria. A total of three hundred (300) copies of questionnaire were drafted and administered to undergraduate students out of which two hundred and forty (240) copies of the questionnaire were properly filled and returned for analysis. Also a total of Twenty two (22) copies of questionnaire were administered to academic librarians out of which seventeen (17) were filled and returned for analysis. Data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics viz frequency counts, percentages and mean.

## Findings

Table 1 revealed that 151 (63%) of the respondents were undergraduate students from Benue State University, Makurdi while89 (38%)of the respondents from Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai. It also shows that 10 (41%) of the respondents being the majority were holders of Bachelor Degrees, followed by 7 (41%) Master Degree holders, while there were no PhD respondents from the academic librarians.

**Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents**

Profile	University	Frequency	Percentage (%)
BSUM		151	63
IBBUL		89	37
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>240</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Academic Librarians Qualification</b>			
BLS		10	59
MLS		7	41
PH.D		-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>17</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 2: Effect of Book Theft on Lending Services (Academic librarians)**

S/n	Statements	SA (4)	A (3)	D (3)	SD (4)	Mean ( $\bar{X}$ )	Std. (U)
1	The frequent disappearance of books from the shelves affects lending services	10 59%	6 35%	1 6%	-	3.50	0.51
2	Scanty nature of library collection affects lending services	11 65%	5 29%	1 6%	-	3.50	0.62
3	Limited/few copies of library resources on various subject areas affect lending services	9 53%	4 24%	4 24%	-	3.60	0.62
4	Lack of immediate replacement of stolen resources in the library affects lending services	8 47%	9 53%	-	-	3.30	0.85

Table 2 showed that four items were listed for academic librarians to respond regarding the effect of book theft on lending services to students in two state university libraries in North-Central Nigeria; the responses indicated that four items produced high mean scores which were above 2.50 bench mark on the 4-point Linker scale. These items include item 1: the frequent disappearance of books from the shelves affect lending services ( $\bar{X}$ =3.50), item 2: scanty nature of library collection affect lending services ( $\bar{X}$ =3.50), item 3: limited/few copies of library resources on various subject areas affect lending services ( $\bar{X}$ =3.60) and item 4: lack of immediate replacement of stolen resources in the library affect lending services ( $\bar{X}$ =3.30). All these items showed that book theft in libraries have negative effects on the lending services to students in the universities under study.

Table 3 showed that four items were provided for students to identify the effect of book theft on lending services to students in the studied universities, out of which three items produced high mean scores above 2.50 bench mark on the 4-point Linker scale. This has to do with item 1: book theft does not permit me to borrow library books from my library ( $\bar{X}$ =3.60), item 2: book theft makes me not to have interest in visiting the library and this affects lending services ( $\bar{X}$ =2.90), item 3: book theft creates an empty shelves in my discipline area in the library and this affects lending services ( $\bar{X}$ =2.70). These items with high mean scores indicate that book theft observed in libraries negatively affects lending services while item 4: book theft makes it difficult to locate information resources for lending services ( $\bar{X}$ =2.40) produced low mean value below 2.50 bench mark showing that it does not have much effect on lending services to students in the studied universities.

**Table 3: Effect of Book Theft on Lending Services (Students)**

S/n	Statements	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean ( $\bar{X}$ )	S/n
1	Book theft does not permit me to borrow library books from my library	159 71%	41 18%	16 7%	7 3%	3.60	1
2	Book theft makes me not to have interest in visiting the library and this affects lending services	48 22%	121 54%	41 18%	13 6%	2.90	2
3	Book theft creates an empty shelves in my discipline area in the library and this affects lending services	28 13%	106 48%	76 34%	13 6%	2.70	3
4	Book theft makes it difficult to locate information resources for lending services	26 12%	74 33%	78 35%	45 20%	2.40	4

**Table 4: Ways Library resources are stolen (Academic librarians)**

S/n	Statements	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean ( $\bar{X}$ )	S/n
1	Hiding library materials under clothes and inside pockets	8 47%	9 53%	-	-	3.50	0.51
2	Tearing page(s) off	5 29%	12 71%	-	-	3.30	0.47
3	Removal of jacket covers in books	8 47%	7 41%	2 12%	-	3.40	0.70
4	Taking out library materials when security is not alert	9 53%	7 41%	1 6%	-	3.50	0.62
5	Stealing another persons' ID card to borrow library materials	5 29%	9 53%	3 18%	-	3.10	0.70
6	Use of chemical substance to erase stamps from library materials	6 35%	6 35%	5 29%	-	3.10	0.83
7	Removal of date due slips from books	1 6%	10 59%	6 35%	-	2.70	0.59
8	Patrons joining hands with some staff of library	3 18%	9 53%	4 24%	1 6%	2.80	0.81

Table 4 disclosed that academic librarians were provided with eight items to indicate the ways library resources are stolen in two state university libraries in North-Central Nigeria. All the eight items produced high mean scores of ( $\bar{X}$ =3.35) (item1), ( $\bar{X}$ =3.30) (item2), ( $\bar{X}$ =3.40) (item3), ( $\bar{X}$ =3.50) (item4), ( $\bar{X}$ =3.10) (item5), ( $\bar{X}$ =3.10) (item6), ( $\bar{X}$ =2.70) (item7) and ( $\bar{X}$ =2.80) (item8). These eight items include the following statements: hiding library materials under clothes and inside pockets, tearing page(s) off, removal of jacket covers in books, taking out library materials when security is not alert, stealing another persons' ID card to borrow library materials, use of chemical substance to erase stamps from library materials, remove of date due slips from books and patrons joining hands with some staff of library. This shows that the library resources are usually stolen and the ways by which they are stolen negatively affect lending services.

### Discussion of Findings

Result has revealed that majority of the respondents were from Benue State University, Makurdi (BSUM). This could be attributed to the fact that Benue State University, Makurdi has been in existence before IBBUL and could have more library staff and students than IBBUL.

It was also revealed from study, that all the responses on the effect of book theft affect lending services to students in the universities under study. This is already represented in Table 2. Statements such as frequent disappearance of books from the shelves, scanty nature of library collection, limited/few copies of library

resources on various subject areas and lack of immediate replacement of stolen resources in the library affect lending services.

From the result, according to the academic librarians, all the statements produced high mean scores indicating that book theft negatively affects lending services. This result is not surprising since the students' population of the two universities studied is quite large and the library resources are not sufficient. The poor financial situation in the country affects most university libraries and so most library management find it difficult to effectively equip their libraries with adequate resources. The bad economic condition of the country equally affects most parents and guardians, so they hardly provide reading materials for their wards in various institutions of learning. Thus, some students are forced to steal the library materials or resources in order to satisfy their information needs. Generally, the study revealed that book theft affects borrowing of library materials to students in the studied universities. This finding corroborates with the findings of Akor (2013) that theft of library books is one among the major crimes that pose as a big risk in libraries which have been on increase for decades. This unwanted behaviour needs to be minimized or eradicated. This result is also similar to the findings of Hant (2003) who stated that the trait to information materials in libraries like theft, vandalism, mutilation and any form of crime pose great challenges in development and growth of college libraries and librarians as a whole. Therefore, increase in number of deviant activities has negatively affects information materials and reduces the library and librarians effectiveness.

Result revealed that out of eight items provided for academic librarians to indicate the ways by which library materials are stolen in two state university libraries in North-Central Nigeria, all the items yielded high scores indicating that all the identified ways are used by the students in stealing library resources. Some of the identified ways include; hiding library materials under clothes and inside pockets, tearing page(s) of books, remove of jacket covers in books, taking out library materials when security is not alert, stealing another persons' ID card to borrow library materials, use of chemical substance to erase stamps from library materials, remove of date due slips from books and patrons joining hands with some staff of library affect lending services to students in the two state university libraries. This finding is similar to that of Isebe (2015) who found out that the influence of book vandalism on lending services in academic libraries is significantly high and submitted that book theft is the worst library abuse. Salaam and Onitade (2010) stated that vandalism of library materials has been an age long problem in the libraries which take the form of ripping off pages of books and document, deliberate defacement of materials and sabotage of library equipment and outright theft of book materials. Bello (2001) disclosed that such vandalized books cannot be loaned and rare materials are lost through this act.

### **Conclusion**

From the finding of this study, it could be deduced that book theft affect lending services to students in two state university libraries in North-Central Nigeria. Based on this, there is need for necessary measures to be taken to ensure that book theft in the libraries is minimised if not completely eradicated. Once these problems are adequately and taken care of in the studied universities, it is expected that there will be a tremendous improvement on lending services to students.

### **Recommendations**

1. Necessary measures should be taken to ensure that book theft in the libraries is minimised if not completely eradicated like installing electronic devices such as closed circuit television monitors or cameras (CCTV) to detect stolen materials in libraries.

2. There should be provision of immediate replacement of stolen library materials to prevent scanty nature of library collection.
3. Stiff penalties should be carried out on defaulters of crimes in academic libraries.
4. Academic librarians should organise orientation to create awareness on how to effectively use lending services regularly in libraries to all library users, as this would minimise the habit of stealing and vandalising library books.
5. Library staff and security guards should be on alerts when library patrons are using library to prevent stealing and vandalising library materials.

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