

# **ABUSE OF LIBRARY MATERIALS IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES: A CASE STUDY OF DELTA STATE POLYTECHNIC LIBRARY, OGWASHI-UKU, NIGERIA**

**Anyaobi, G.**

*The Library, Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi-uku  
E-mail: grace.anyaobi@yahoo.com*

**Akpoma, O.**

*The Library, Delta State Poltechnic, Otefe-oghara  
E-mail: omamomo@gmail.com*

## **ABSTRACT**

*This study reports the findings on the study on abuse of library materials in Delta State Polytechnic Library, Ogwashi-Uku. Systematic sampling technique was employed. Questionnaire was used for data collection. Simple percentage was used for data analysis, on the sample of ND 2 students of the department of business administration. Population of 200 students were randomly selected. The study revealed that factors such as selfishness was one of the factors responsible for the abuse of library materials. This was followed by inadequate number of multiple copies of library materials, high cost of photocopying and fear that one may not find the material at the next visit. It is recommended that efforts should be made to provide multiple copies of materials as well as adequate facilities for photocopying.*

*Keywords: Library materials, Abuse, Academic Library, theft*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The abuse of library materials through theft, mutilation and other forms of abuse has posed tremendous challenge to the library profession. According to Jackson (1991) incidents of theft, non-return of materials and mutilation of library stock are on the increase. Sornam and Shyla (1997) have reported that the theft and mutilation of library materials was common in many libraries and only the magnitude of the crime differed from place to place. Ajegbomogun (2004) states that theft and mutilation of books and non-books is a common phenomenon in Nigerian university libraries and if not checked will create a serious threat to Nigerian libraries' collection and preservations., Senyah (2004) identifies the scarcity of needed books (90.9%) and selfishness (81.81%) as being the main cause of book theft and mutilation. His study was however not conclusive on the perpetrators of the abuse. He concluded that the absence of regular stock-taking or inventory has made it practically impossible for the libraries to quantify the extent of losses. Various writers have expressed their views on what contributes to the causes of different forms of abuse in the library. However, many researchers base their argument on economic depression and security

as the main causes of abuse of library materials. These include Ajegbomogun (2004), Agboola (2001), Afolabi (1993), Akinfolarin (1992) among others. Some other studies reveal that theft is motivated by societal problems. Any shift from factors such as inadequate service staff at night and during the weekends, lack of multiple copies of library materials in high demand and inadequate photocopying facilities may cause a negative impact on users' disposition to library materials. A study conducted by Ajegbomogun (2004) reveals that the focus of abuse is predominantly on reference books and journals. The results of the study tallied with those of Bello (1997) and Luke (1991). Abuse of library materials is not confined to hardened criminals. It spans all categories of users. According to Holt (2007), every profession has its "closed areas" which are little studied and seldom discussed publicly. In librarianship, theft by staff is one of those "closed areas." He further states that staff theft is a "hot-potato" issue from a manager's perspective because any action around this issue is complicated.

The complications arise from allegation of illegal behaviour and, therefore, arrests and court cases; union contract negotiations, risks of bad publicity, loss of public support; possible changes in policy or procedures; recruitment of replacement employees; problems with staff morale; changes in training; and the possibility of new costs of increased security whether through technology or additional staff. All of these issues have economic dimensions. Taken together, these studies offer a significant body of evidence to suggest that the abuse of library materials is prevalent in all types of libraries in all parts of the world. The intensity may vary from library to library. This study discusses the abuse of library materials in the Delta State polytechnic library, Ogwashi-Uku.

The main function of academic library among others is to assist in the advancement of learning, research and dissemination of knowledge, serving the information needs of the users. Delta State Polytechnic Library, Ogwashi-Uku is not an exception in rendering such services to the member of the polytechnic and its communities. Some of the services the library renders include library orientation for fresh students, loaning out books and receiving them when they are due, inter-library lending/document delivery and book binding. The library also supports the departmental libraries of the polytechnic. The vision of the Library is to create an awareness to meet and satisfy the information needs of the community without any forms of discrimination so as to provide effective leadership in Delta State and elsewhere.

Abuse of library materials in libraries is a menace that has persisted, and the worsening state of libraries in Nigeria appears to have aggravated its intensity and the consequent detrimental impact. Abuse of library materials has become a common occurrence in academic libraries in Nigeria as well as other parts of the world and if this is not investigated and checked, will create a serious threat to Nigerian libraries' collection and preservations. Disappointment arising from inability of library users to locate materials from shelves due to user's behaviour of hiding materials and

tearing out some pages in a particular text; the negative effects of these unacceptable users behaviour towards abuse of library materials spurred this research work. The study intends to:

1. Find out the various forms of abuse of library materials.
2. Explore the factors that are responsible for abuse of library materials.
3. Find out how library materials can be secured.

Hence, the following research questions were formulated in the course of this work.

1. What are the various forms of abuse of library materials?
2. What are the factors responsible for the abuse of library materials?
3. What are the various ways library materials can be secured?

## METHOD

The study covered ND 2 students of the Department of Business Administration of Delta State polytechnic, Ogwashi-Uku. Two hundred (200) students were randomly selected. Through systematic sampling technique, copies of a structured questionnaire were administered and retrieved from the 200 undergraduate students of the Department of Business Administration of the Delta State polytechnic, Ogwashi-Uku in the library. The data that were collected were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages. The completed copies of questionnaire were retrieved and analyzed. The questionnaires were administered in the institution library. The two hundred (200) questionnaires administered were all retrieved.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1:** Various Forms of Abuse of Library Materials.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Torn out pages	70	35%
Writing in books	48	24%
Stealing of books	2	1%
Mutilation	16	8%
Hiding of books	64	32%
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source:* Survey, 2012

**Table 2:** Factors Responsible For Abuse of Library Materials.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Selfishness	94	47%
Inadequate number of library materials (multiple copies)	66	33%
High cost of photocopying	32	16%
Fear that one may not find the material at the next visit	8	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source:* Survey, 2012

**Table 3:** Ways in which Library Materials can be secured

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Provide regular orientation to users of library	50	25%
Provide enough library materials	60	30%
Provide surveillance camera	55	27.5%
Search users	10	5%
Books should be examined after return	8	4%
Abusers should pay fines	17	8.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source:* Survey, 2012

In line with the purpose of this research, the responses were sought to know the abuse of library materials in academic libraries. As shown on table 1, 35% of the respondents cited tearing of pages from books as the most widespread manifestation of abuse of library materials. This was followed by hiding of books which formed 32%, with 24%, 16% and 2% indicating writing on the pages of books, mutilation and stealing of books respectively. As shown on table 2, 47% of the respondents cited selfishness as the most factor responsible for the abuse of library materials. This was followed by inadequate number of multiple copies of library materials 33% with 16% and 4% indicating high cost of photocopying and fear that one may not find the material during the next visit. As shown on table 3, 30% of the respondents cited providing enough library materials, that is, multiple copies of library materials as one of the ways in which library materials can be secured. This was followed by the provision of surveillance cameras 27.5% with 25%, 8.5%, 5% and 4% indicating provision of surveillance, provision of regular orientation of users of library, abusers should pay fines, search users and books should be examined after return.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There is no doubt that for as long as library materials are physically handled and are intellectually explored, there is bound to be some forms of abuse or the other. The results of the study have clearly indicated that the documents of the polytechnic library, Ogwashi-Uku are under serious threats of abuse. The documents are variously under threats of theft, mis-shelving, non-return and mutilation-tearing of pages, among others. The following are being recommended to prevent the abuse of library materials in the polytechnic library, Ogwashi-Uku in particular, which would also be useful to other libraries. Many thefts occur in libraries because of difficulties in getting access to the materials. It is recommended that efforts should be made to provide multiple copies of materials as well as adequate facilities for photocopying. Computerised methods of checking or detecting offenders should be adopted. An example is the electronic theft detection system. Young and energetic security personnel could also be engaged to man the entrances of the library. Again surveillance cameras could be used to monitor the activities of both staff and patrons. Disciplinary measures relating to theft, document mutilation, refusal to return borrowed books, and keeping of

books long after they are due for return should be enforced. Offenders should be made to replace or pay for any lost books irrespective of their status and to pay fines for over-due books.

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