



Mis-Shelving and Staff Assault as Correlates of Patrons' Use of Resources in Federal University Libraries in South-South, Nigeria

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Abstract

This research aimed at ascertaining the relationship between library mis-shelving and staff assault and patrons' use of library resources in federal universities in south-south Nigeria. Two research questions were posed and two corresponding hypotheses formulated to guided the study. Descriptive survey and simple linear correlation research designs was adopted. A 4-point rating scale was used to collect data from a sample size of 394 drawn from 33,159 user population. The sample size was determined using Krecjie and Morgan's table for determining sample size while proportionate sampling technique was applied to determine the individual student respondents of each of the institutions. Data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics to obtain means and coefficient of correlation for answering research questions and t-test and ANOVA statistics for testing hypotheses. Findings shows that there is a positive significant relationship among mis-shelving of books and staff assault on one hand and the patrons' use of the library resources on the other hand in south-south federal universities. Based on the findings, it is recommended among others that: library management should mount a working Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) or any other electronic device that can augment the human effort in tracking and reporting the criminal acts by patrons.

Keywords: Library Resources, Use of Resources, Mis-shelving, Staff Assault

Introduction

Library resources are vital intellectual sources that assist members of communities to meet their information requirements, promote studies, research and acquisition of knowledge. They comprise aside human and financial resources, the print, non print, audiovisuals, and electronic resources. These sources need to be guarded to ensure availability, safety and ease of access however; the ability of the library to play its full role effectively is often challenged by misdemeanors and criminal incidences like, mutilation, theft, vandalism, arson, fighting, hiding of resources, staff assault, exhibited by the patrons. Yeboah, Kwafo and Amoah (2017) citing the respective studies of Adewuyi and Adekanye, Abioye and Rasaki identified criminal incidences in libraries to include among others, violent attacks on library employees, harassment, verbal and physical assault of library staff while Barr-Walker, Hoffner, McMunn-Tetangco and Mody (2021) study discovered that out of 579 respondents, 54% experienced and/or observed sexual harassment at work. While some of the incidences are tolerant displays others are punishable human conduct that interferes with private rights and has harmful effect on the public.

In the university libraries where, support for learning and research activities are the major objectives, simple offences otherwise referred to as infraction vis-a-viz arson, mutilation, vandalism, treason, defacing of information material and users personal belongings, mis-shelving and staff assault among others are predominant. Nnam, Okogwu and Adinde (2018) identified mutilation, burglary, arson and theft as common forms of crimes committed in the library. Although these acts could be attributed to juvenile delinquency when students are involved, they hamper not only the collection development processes of the library but also, deprive the users from accessing and using quality and complete library resources. For this study, incidences of mis-shelving and staff assault are considered.

Shelving is a daily and apparently, free task critical to the efficiency and effectiveness of ensuring accessibility because, if materials are misplaced, they are as good as lost and locating information would be impossible. Although it is always recommended that all consulted library materials should only be re-shelved by the library staff, many patrons fail to adhere to this simple instruction hence mis-shelving majority of the library resources. Mis-shelving or hiding of Library resources is a deliberate and mischievous move by users to remove library resources from the actual position on the shelf to locations that will make it difficult or impossible for others to locate. Omotayo and Ajayi (2006) reported that mis-shelving constitutes a special demeanor carried out by students who deliberately hide books in places where they would not be expected to be found.

Furthermore, all patrons have the right to use the Library for academic purposes in an environment that is safe, quiet, comfortable and respectful. While library staff is concerned with collection, organization and dissemination of information materials, so that users can take full advantage of the acquired materials for their continuous personal and academic development, he also act to maintain a serene environment devoid of interferences with library operations, its contents, or any other behavior generally considered inappropriate in a public place. The desire to execute this serious expectation from the library staff is in most cases affected when users resort to abusing their integrity which in library parlance is referred to as staff assault - an act of abusing, threatening, or intimidating Library users or staff through language or actions. It is also a crime that could lead to attack or bombard someone physically, verbally or even written. While verbal assault consists of insults, swearing, or threats, a strong criticism like a negative review in the

newspaper and anonymous letters written against a staff and dropped in organizational suggestion boxes by clients, are written assaults. Physical assault can range from getting pushed to getting shot. As stated in Oxford Reference (2022) it is an intentional or reckless act that causes someone to be put in fear of immediate physical harm, a form of trespass to a person and a crime as well as a tort. By classification, some assaults could be ordinary (or common) and some serious. While common assault is a summary offence punishable by a fine and/or up to six months' imprisonment, more serious assaults are known as aggravated assaults and carry stricter penalties.

Since comprehensive use of the library is not feasible as a result of demeanors that are witnessed in the library which has also reduced the collection strength, ability of users to locate some information resources, willingness of the staff to render help to individual users, visibility of libraries and also prompted the doubt by some university management concerning the need for the library, academic libraries must determine a focus to ensure the utilization of the resources. It is in relation to the above assertion that the researcher is carrying out this study with a view to ascertaining the relationship existing between mis-shelving and staff assault and the patrons' use of the library resources in the university libraries studied.

Research Question

The following questions were posed to guide the study:

1. What is the coefficient of relationship between mis-shelving of library resources and patrons' use of library resources in federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria studied?
2. What is the coefficient of relationship between staff assault and patrons' use of library resources in federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria studied?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

- H₀₁:** The coefficient of correlation between mis-shelving of books and patrons' use of library resources in federal universities in South-South Nigeria is not significant; and
- H₀₂:** The coefficient of correlation between staff assault and patrons' use of library in federal universities in South-South Nigeria is not significant.

Literature Review

Mis-shelving, a deliberate criminal act, is a perennial and nagging problem in libraries. It is an intentional drift of books by users who cannot readily borrow them, even when they urgently need to use them for research and study. This act, which is often experienced on books that are most likely to be highly demanded, causes delays in library service delivery and use of the resources because patrons must wait for the items to be located. No wonder Sung, Whisler and Sung (2009) aver that mis-shelved books create an enormous amount of frustration and waste in both patron and staff time in trying to locate them. Although Fasae and Adedokun's (2016) study stated that misplacement or book hiding in library stack was not a much familiar practice among users, purposive mis-shelving of items, especially reference books was identified as library

security breaches (Alao et al. cited in Yamson & Cobblah, 2017). Furthermore, Fagbola and Ogunjobi (2020) see mis-shelving as a common experience judging from the 57.95% response given to it as one of the Nigerian Research Institutes' libraries experiences. Similarly, Cooper and Wolfthausen cited in DeLooperd and Gonsalves (2020) notes that books tend to physically move or drift from the location they are supposed to occupy on any given shelf. Under such circumstance, the materials are withdrawn from their rightful places on the shelves and sent to other shelves where only the culprit and to some extents, his cronies, can easily access them to the detriment of other library users. It should however be noted that the extent to which books are hidden by uses vary from one institution to another.

Staff Assault and Patrons Use of Library Resources

Assault is an intentional violent or verbal attack/*act that puts another individual in apprehension of immediate harm*. With regards to the library it is often verbal which in most cases produces as much psychological distress for staff victims as did some physical assaults. The act of assaulting the library staff is thus a form of library crime that to some extent affects the staff attitude to serving the users which at the long run, affects their ability to use the library resources. In libraries, assaults of staff by patrons abound. A study by Kean and McKoy-Johnson (2009) conducted in the Main Library of the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, found that verbal abuse was the most prevalent form of aggressive behaviour towards library staff. Similarly, Kendrick (2020) study on Public Librarian Low-Morale Experience saw library staff indicating an overwhelming 93% verbal abuse and 50% emotional abuse from library users as causes of low morale at work. Furthermore, Katopol (2015), notes that librarians are subject to compassion fatigue (CF) sustained from dealing with difficult patrons, Vraimaki, Koloniari, Kyprianos and Koulouris (2019) reports offers insight into problematic patron behaviours and their impacts on college librarians while, (CBC News, 2020) show increases of violence against librarians within an eight-year period, highlighting upticks in violent, threatening and verbal abuse behaviours in Toronto Public Library

All these experiences have negative effect on patrons use of the library resources as, disengagement and patron interaction avoidance were commonly reported effects on the core work of public librarians. No wonder a staff who once experienced physical abuse from a patron admitted, "I'm not as likely to come out from behind the desk to help someone unless they need my help physically where they are, partly because I want to have that barrier between them and me" (Kendrick, 2020: 12). Although assault, abuse or neglect is in a way a form of useful training, librarians' emotional responses to uncivil patron behaviour reduce enthusiasm, work engagement and lead to observed instances of colleague's engagement in revenge behaviors. This invariably exacerbates users, especially the novices, ability to make use of the library resources. The severity of the effect of staff assault on patrons' use of the library prompted the emphatic statement that, any patron who engages in repeated disruptive behavior that interferes with staff or others' use of the Library, or engages in behaviors that violate City Code or State Statutes, may be permanently banned from the Library premises by the Director. (Maquoketa Public Library, 2023).

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Methods

In this study, the researcher adopted a simple linear correlation designs involving Pearson Product Moment Correlation approach. The population of the study is 33,159. This comprises staff and students of the federal universities studied. The librarians in the university libraries studied are 160 while the registered student population is 32,999. Figures of the two groups were however merged to get the total population. A sample of 394 respondents was drawn from the population of the study using Krecjie and Morgan's (1970) table for determining sample size. The table states that for a population of 30,000 - 39,999, a sample of 394 should be used. Since the population figure of the six institutions are not equal, proportionate sub-sampling techniques was adopted to eliminate bias as well as draw representative respondents from each of the institutions. The study adopted two four point modified Likert-type rating scales as the instruments for data collection. Two sets of instrument were developed for the study. The first instrument titled Students' Utilization of Library Resources Scale (SULRS) comprising, 25 items was used to elicit information from the student's on the information resources utilised while the second instrument titled Crime Practices in Federal University Libraries Scale (CPFULS) was used to determine the mis-shelving and staff assault issues of the subject matter.

Data Analysis

Research Question 1: What is the coefficient of relationship between Mis-shelving of books and the patrons' use of library resources in the south-south federal universities?

Table 1

Summaries of correlation analysis on the relationship between mis-shelving and patrons' use of library resources in the south-south zone federal university

V	N	Σ	R	r^2	Remarks
Utilization	387	21158			High
			0.66	0.44	Positive
Mis-shelving of books	387	5011			Relationship

Key: Variables (V:X&Y), Sample Size (n), Summation (Σ), Sum of Squares (SS), Sum of Products (SP), Variance (S^2), Covariance (Cov.), Pearson r (r), and Remarks

Table 1 shows the magnitude and direction of the coefficient of relationship between mis-shelving and patrons' use of library resources in the south-south zone federal university libraries. From the table the coefficient of correlation between mis-shelving of resources and patrons' use of the library in south-south zone federal university libraries is 0.66, while the coefficient of determination is 0.44. The coefficient of correlation is within the range 0.61 – 0.80 for high relationship. The coefficient of correlation is also positive. This shows that there is a high relationship between mis-shelving in the south-south zone federal university libraries and patrons' use of the library resources in the university libraries studied.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significance of correlation between mis-shelving and patrons' use of the library resources in south-south zone federal universities.

Table 2

Summaries of inferential statistics for the relationship between mis-shelving and patrons' use of the library resources south-south zone federal university

V	N	Σ	R	A	Df	t _{cal}	t _{tab}	Decision
X	387	21158						
			0.66	0.05	385	17.155	1.96	Reject Ho ₄
Y	387	5011						

Key: Sample Size (n), Summation (Σ), Coefficient of Relationship (r), Alpha Level (α), Degree of Freedom (df) and t-test of Significance of Correlation between two Variables

Table 2 presented the test of the relationship between mis-shelving and patrons' use of the library resources in the south-south zone federal universities. From the result, the degree of freedom is 385 and the t-calculated value of 17.155 is greater than the t-tabulated value of 1.96. Since the t-calculated value is greater than the t-tabulated value, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis; thus concluding that there is a high positive and significant relationship between mis-shelving and patrons' use of library resources in the south-south zone federal universities.

Research Question 2: What is the coefficient of relationship between staff assault and patrons' use of library resources in the south-south federal universities?

Table 3

Summaries of correlation analysis on the relationship between staff assault and patrons' use of library resources in south-south federal universities studied.

V	N	Σ	R	r ²	Remarks
Utilization	387	21158			Moderate
			0.46	0.21	Positive
Staff Assault	387	3811			Relationship

Key: Variables (V:X&Y), Sample Size (n), Summation (Σ), Sum of Squares (SS), Sum of Products (SP), Variance (S²), Covariance (Cov.), Pearson r (r), and Remarks

Table 3 shows the magnitude and direction of the coefficient of relationship between staff assault and the patrons' use of library resources in south-south federal universities. From the table the coefficient of correlation between staff assault and patrons' use of library in south-south federal universities is 0.46, while the coefficient of determination is 0.21. The coefficient of correlation is within the range 0.41 – 0.60 for moderate relationship. The coefficient of correlation is also positive. This shows that there is a moderate relationship between staff assault and patrons' use of library resources in the south-south federal universities studied.

Hypothesis 2: The coefficient of correlation between staff assault and patrons' use of library resources in south-south federal universities studied is not significant.

Table 4

Summaries of inferential statistics for the relationship between staff assault and the patrons' use of library resources in south-south Nigeria federal universities

V	N	Σ	R	A	Df	t_{cal}	t_{tab}	Decision
X	387	21158						
			0.46	0.05	385	10.094	1.96	Reject H_{07}
Y	387	3811						

Key: Sample Size (n), Summation (Σ), Coefficient of Relationship (r), Alpha Level (α), Degree of Freedom (df) and t-test of Significance of Correlation between two Variables

Table 4 presented the test of the relationship between staff assault and patrons' use of library resources in the south-south federal universities. From the result, the degree of freedom is 385 and the t-calculated value of 10.094 is greater than the t-tabulated value of 1.96. Since the t-calculated value is greater than the t-tabulated value, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis; thus concluding that there is a moderate positive and significant relationship between staff assault and the patrons' use of library resources in the south-south federal universities studied.

Results

1. there is a positive and significant relationship between mis-shelving and patrons' use of library resources in south-south federal universities; and
2. there is a moderate positive and significant relationship between staff assault in the library and the patrons' use of library resources in school libraries in south-south federal universities.

Discussion of Findings

Relationship between mis-shelving of books and the patrons' use of library in south-south federal universities

There is a positive significant relationship between mis-shelving of books and patrons' use of library resources in south-south federal universities. These findings are in line with the findings of Fagbola and Ogunjobi (2020) where 57.95% response was given to mis-shelving as a common experience of the Nigerian Research Institutes' libraries studied. It also corroborates Sung, Whisler and Sung (2009) assertion that mis-shelved books create an enormous amount of frustration and waste in both patron and staff time in trying to locate them.

Relationship between staff assault and patrons' use of library resources

There is a moderate positive and significant relationship between staff assault and patrons' use of library resources in south-south zone federal universities. That the correlation is positive indicates

that assaulting library staff will also affect students' use of the library resources. The moderate extent of relationship indicates that assaults however will moderately impact on patrons' utilization of the library resources available in the libraries. The test hypothesis shows that there is significance of correlation between staff assault and patrons' use of library resources in the university libraries studied. The coefficient of determination indicates that approximately twenty-one percent of the variations in use of resources in university libraries by patrons are explained by staff assaults in libraries. This shows a lot of influence that staff assault has on the patrons' use of library resources in south-south federal universities. These finding is in line with the captured resolution, "I'm not likely to come out from behind the desk to help someone unless they need my help physically where they are, partly because I want to have that barrier between them and me" taken by an assaulted staff in a study conducted by (Kendrick, 2020).

Conclusion

Mis-shelving and staff assault as types of library crime and user disemeanor are gradually eroding the image of the library physical plant, a basis for the question posed by many on the relevance of the library when the available information resources cannot be traced and the environment is not safe. Although it may not be possible to completely abate such library crimes, there is need to observe their influence on the use of library resources so as to monitor their existence, obviate chaos, ensure peaceful co-existence of the users and library staff and also improve effective use of the library resources. The result of the study shows that a positive and significant relationship exist between mis-shelving and patrons' use of library resources in south-south federal universities while the relationship between staff assault in the library and the patrons use of library resources is moderate, positive and significant in south-south federal universities.

Recommendations

1. The students' use of the library resources should be strictly monitored so as to checkmate abuse of the resource that often make users to detest using the library.
2. The university management should ensure that librarians are trained and retrained on the need to be accommodating and endure certain offensive attitudes of patrons since the success of the use of library resources also depends on the staff recruited to man the library.

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