**LAFIA JOURNAL OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE**
*Volume 4, Number 2, 2023.*
*https://lalibjournals.org/index.php/LJLIS*
*ISSN: Print - 2814-0702, Online - 2814-0710*
LJLIS

# DELINQUENCY OF INFORMATION RESOURCES IN ACADEMIC LIBRARY: A STUDY OF LEGACY UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, THE GAMBIA

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**Abstract**
*The research is based on delinquencies of clients for information resources in Legacy University. Delinquencies of information resources has been identified as one of the major blocks against the progress of library resources in academic libraries. The research, therefore, aims to ascertain the causes of delinquency in Legacy University library, The Gambia, the effect of delinquency in Legacy University library The Gambia, the measures adopted to prevent the acts of delinquency in Legacy University library The Gambia. Three research questions were raised and three objectives guided the study. To undertake this investigation, Survey method was adopted and the population comprises of students, academic and non - academic staff of the library. There was no sample because the population was too small for the study. Questionnaire were administered to students, academic and non-academic staff of the university and their responses were collated and analyzed using table, frequency and percentage. The study concluded that what motivates the development of a Society is the ability to get the right information at the right time and one of the agencies in this drive is the library. However, the effective services of the library depends very strongly on the availability of needed information resources, therefore information resources must be protected from thieves and mutilators. The study recommends the need to educate library clients, periodic library orientation, conferences, as a necessity to acquaint clients the importance of books and its aftermath mutilation effects to the library services and the need to install CCTV in Libraries to check delinquency.*

**Key words:** Delinquency, Academic Library, Information resources, Security

## Introduction

The issue of delinquency of information resources is discussed by many authors, Book theft is considered as the oldest library problem which has continued to exist even in present day libraries. Abdulsalami (2005) opine juvenile delinquency of library resources as always a problem for librarians, a person is guilty of theft if he dishonestly appropriates property belonging to another with the intention of permanently depriving the other of it.

In the context of this study, delinquency of information resources is seen from this

perspective. It is also necessary and essential for librarians to understand the essential requirement of delinquency of information resources from legal point of view. Delinquency of information resources is an anti-social, unlawful act and an offence, the perpetrator of which can be subjected to legal punishment. Ugah (2007) considers theft of library resources as a criminal activity and formidable obstacle to information access and use. He also considered theft and mutilation of library resources assault on staff as serious issues that need urgent attention.

Delinquency of information resources on the other hand entails defacement or damage of library resources/materials. It involves removal of book pages, articles from periodicals, of illustrations and or the whole text block from monographs. This practice is becoming serious, disheartening and unfortunate fact of library life. Delinquency was found to take many forms ranging from underlining and highlighting in library books, tearing and or removing some pages of books and tempering with editorial comment that were also appearing in the library books, misuse of library resources such as bending the spine of book to ensure that it stays open at the right page, using wet fingers to turn book pages, marking or shading book pages with pencil, biro or colour pen, tearing pages and damage to the book spine. Abdulsalami (2005) insists that necessity rather than criminal drive is responsible for delinquency of library resources, dissatisfaction or unfamiliarity with library services, lack of knowledge of replacement costs and time, lack of concern for the need of others often may cause a library user to mutilate or damage resources.

Information required by users appears in a variety of formats such as books, serials, maps, compact disc, institutional repository, CD-ROM, video, internet, etc. These formats are collectively called information resources (information carriers), this is because these various objects bear information that is useful to the users of library. These information resources can be categorized as:

**Print Media:** These are printed texts and they include books, pamphlets, serials, etc.

**Manuscripts:** These are writings made by hand or as typescript such as letters, minutes of meetings etc.

**Cartographic Materials:** These are materials representing the whole or part of the earth surface or any celestial body at any scale. They include two and three dimensional objects such as maps, plans, globes etc.

**Graphic Media:** These are two dimensional representation of materials, which can be viewed without a projector (photographs, drawings ,charts, post cards) or those that can be projected without motion by means of an optical device (filmstrips, slides, transparencies)

**Audio Recordings:** These are information materials that have pre –recorded sound vibrations. They are also called sound recordings, these are equivalent of a print text that can be recorded on a sound recording device such as sound disc, sound cassette, tape reel, gramophone records, compact disc etc.

**Audio Visual Media:** These are library materials which provide information that can be seen and heard that is they produce sound as well as images that cam be projected with motion. They include motion pictures, video recordings, compact disc etc.

**Microforms:** These are transparent or opaque media bearing images in a reduced form e.g. microfilm and microfiche. They can be read by the use of information projectors called readers e.g. microfiche reader

**Digital Media:** These are media in which information represented in an electronic form, e.g. computer files, diskettes, compact discs etc. (Files that can be accessed only by a computer) Abdulsalami and Abdulsalami (2014)

Books are the best known of all library resources. Books have been in existence since the advent of printing technology during the middle ages and nevertheless, other library resources supplement the print media collection, especially for learning and recreational purposes. As much as possible users want relevant information no matter the format in which it appears, it is therefore not that libraries, acquire, store, and preserve a variety of materials for their users.

An academic library is a library that is attached to a higher education institution and services two complimentary purposes to support the cur riculum and the research of the university Faculty and students (http://en.m.wikipedia.org.wiki (Accessed 20/11/2023).One of the academic library is situated at Legacy University but is a private Bilingual University par excellence approved and granted license to operate as a higher educational institution by the government of the Gambia. It is a comprehensive educational institution focused on teaching, learning, research and community service. The overall goal is to advance Knowledge, Research and Excellence towards achieving a fulfilled career and destiny. To pursue a scholarly educational and moral training, strategic research for the attainment of a sustainable socio-economic develops for the Gambia and the West Africa. Our overall goal is to advance knowledge research and excellence towards achieving a fulfilled career and destiny. The University Library which was establish in 2017 holds variety of information resources on different disciplines ranging from Medicine, Pharmacy, Nursing, Law, Education, Managements, Engineering etc.

**Statement of Problem**

Academic library is very vital and the foundation of every academic institution, this vitality could be affected if the library resources irrespective of format are illegally removed, destroyed, disfigured, defaced due to poor library security. Library resources (e.g. Print and non-print books, maps, newspapers, manuscripts, dictionaries, almanacs, etc.) are the backbone for continuous existence of a library and keeps generation to generation up to date. Juvenile delinquency of library resources can make a library become handicap preventing the major function of the library which was to "acquire, organize, store, and conserve knowledge, ideas, research and publications to make information readily available and accessible to the users of the library within the fastest possible time. Theft of resources also includes magazines, journals, print photograph, maps, documents of diverse types etc.

Different approach is taken in theft and mutilation of library resources. A whole text book taken, leaving back covers or with covers or tearing/removing off its pages until

the whole contents are removed .Sometimes staffs placed in positions to check the IN and OUT of users fail to do their work perfectly, books are thrown out through windows, concealment of books in clothes, tearing off important pages, borrowing (Using due date slip to smuggle out books, users pray for light-out in the evening so that they can take books out before emergency lights would be provided they would have gone out with book or books."(Idachaba 1998). This and many more motivated the research to find out the problem of juvenile delinquency in Legacy University Library, The Gambia.

**Objectives of the Study**

The purpose of this study is as follows:

1. To know the causes of delinquency of information resources in Legacy University library The Gambia
2. To ascertain the effect of delinquency of information resources in Legacy University library The Gambia
3. To determine the measures adopted to prevent the acts of delinquency of information resources in Legacy University library The Gambia

**Research Questions**

1. What are the causes of delinquency of information resources in Legacy University library The Gambia?
2. What are the effects of delinquency of information resources in Legacy University library The Gambia?
3. What measures are adopted to prevent the acts of delinquency of information resources in Legacy University library The Gambia

**Review of related Literature**

**Delinquency of Information Resources in Legacy University The Gambia**

The delinquency of information resources in academic libraries is a common problem that deserves serious attention from librarians in particular and other stakeholders in general. It is an immoral act to mutilate information resources thereby denying others the opportunity of using such materials. Mutilation is carried out by lazy, uncultured users for their selfish ends. 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. Jama'a reports that the first library stock taking by Bayero University, Kano library attempt to prove a failure and no further attempts were made. There were therefore no statistical records that can be relied upon to measure the magnitude of book theft. Information on book theft was obtained from unions and interview. For instance, the Muslim student society of that university alerted the authority on the mysterious disappearance of the few relevant books in the library. A student who tries to beat the security check at the circulation desk was reported to be caught with some library materials. Students collide with some library staff to remove and destroy book

Jama'a further reports that some library staff themselves steals especially newly acquired materials. Before processing these materials, they immediately write their names on the books that got their interest to signify ownership. These materials only bear their own identity but not library stamp, thus comfortably beating the traditional security check at the circulation counter. Another device is by borrowing tickets, they later come and remove them and have book cards destroyed. The academic staffs of the university were also accused. Some of them secretly take away materials out of the institutions library without the permission of the relevant authority, some of them therefore; disappear with library books loaned to them. On the foreign scene, Bahr has given extensive statistical data of library stock loses from some selected schools libraries in some of the developed countries of the world. She says "the Suffolk country senior high school reported that about 22% of its newly acquired books had disappeared from the shelves". Library stock losses in individual public libraries are believed to be higher than the National average citing examples of individual. Obikoya (2004) in another study on delinquency in libraries resources reports that 78.6% of library materials are taken away illegally under clothes. Hence mode of dressing is gradually becoming a source of concern in terms of library security. Antwi believes that, generally power black-out affords the most likely opportunity for library delinquencies. Student/other users take this advantage and hide under the cover of darkness to steal or mutilate library materials.

According to Bello (2007) reveals that stealing of library information resources via tearing and damage accounts constitutes 66% of library crimes in Nigerian universities. Hence, he concludes that security problems of stealing and mutilation in academic libraries are mostly through tearing valuable parts of library materials. In this regard, tearing of pages may be seen as mutilation.

Similarly, Akinfolarin reports that users take advantage of tiny windows that have no barrier to hinder book passage and throw books outside, while Relay identifies staff involvement as an unfortunate means through which books are either stolen or mutilated. He notes further that employees of libraries and thieves are not themselves immune from temptation of removing items for sale to legitimate businessmen. In the same vein, Afolabi (2006) reports this method when he notes that an unscrupulous user can use the date-due-slip of legally borrowed books to steal other circulation books from the library. All that the person does is to remove and take the date-due-slip of a book that has been properly charged out to him by the library and then takes another circulation book of his choice and replaces the date-due-slip of the book with that of previous book borrowed. This method is regarded as very subtle method because with this method, there is no limit to the number of books that can be stole.

**Causes of delinquency of information resources in Legacy University, The Gambia.**

Various writers have expressed their view on what contributes to the cause of different forms of abuse in the library. However, many researchers base their argument on economics depress and insecurity as the main cause of abuse of library resources. Bello (2007) among others. Bello (2007) conducted a study on juvenile delinquency academic

libraries in Nigeria, revealing that there is a lack of security in university libraries. Users resorted to delinquent behavior because demand outstripped the supply of library resources. This result in competition for resources, which invariably tempts users to steal, mutilates, or engages in illegal borrowing. Lorenzen (2006) also observes that "library delinquency takes many forms, ranging from underlining and highlighting text, tearing and or removing pages, and tampering with the content. Lorenzen identifies several causes for mutilation, to include: students' dissatisfaction or unfamiliarity with library services, lack of knowledge of replacement costs and time, lack of concern for the needs of others, very few students think of library mutilation and theft as a crime".

Abifarin (2007) contributed that "students steal or mutilate library materials because of the following reasons:

1. Scarcity of library materials
2. Selfishness on the part of some students
3. Financial constraint
4. High cost of learning materials

Nwalo (2003) also asserted that, "the major problem encountered in library security is that the security department of the parent body (in the case of academic and special libraries) insists on providing security personnel for the library. These security men are loyal to the security department and not to the library authority. This situation makes it difficult for the librarian to control security matters in his library as his orders may be flouted" Moreover, the security personnel posted to the library are often not literate enough to identify library materials and prevent them from being stolen. They are always gullible as library users often play on their intelligence. Library security will definitely be enhanced by the deployment of trained library personnel at the security posts.

Alafiyato asserts that with poor security, patrons may be tempted to steal. This poor security, Afolabi (2003) argues originates from lack of modern security system in the libraries. Hence, one can conclude that manually controlled security in academic libraries allows perfunctory searching of library users at the library exit and insecurity of the entire library building. Obikoya (2004) reports that non- availability of photocopying services is accountable for nearly 70% of the reasons why library patrons steal or mutilate library resources. She broke this non- availability to means, frequent break down, heavy charge and lack of maintenance. Robert confirms further that some library patrons steal or mutilate library resources on the ground that photocopying machine was not in order. He therefore advised libraries to provide cheap and easy-to access photocopying services if they want to curb this menace. Ologbosanye notes that users in the libraries can steal or mutilate library materials as a way of protesting against some library policies and procedures. Be that as it may, certain measures have to be adopted to check or prevent this menace in academic libraries. Hence, according to Timothy posit that implementation of practical security at a little or no cost is important because it concerns library staff at all levels. It mostly involves intensifying surveillance in and around the library building for possible detection and prevention of library malpractices. The security of the information resources of the libraries are vested on the hand of library workers whose work qualities

that include patience and imagination lead to successful security programmes. In other words, for libraries to reduce incidences of library delinquencies of their materials, security is the first measure to be considered. Availability of photocopying services around the library premises is yet another measure. According to Aguolu (2000), in order to help reduce the incidences of pilfering and mutilation of books and journals, however, as a measure to curb theft and mutilation, photocopying services must be available at an affordable price.

Proper orientation of users on the dangers of theft and mutilation by library staff has been suggested as a good measure to curb this habit of library materials among library users. Edibo states that since theft and mutilation has not denied any solution, strategies such as user education/enlightenment on the proper use of library materials should be embarked upon by library practitioners. To achieve this effectively, Akinfolarin (2004) suggests that librarians or representatives could use part of the time slated for use of library in general studies programmes and library orientation period to educate the students on the negative effects of theft and mutilation of library materials on both the library and users of the library.

**Effects of delinquency of information resources in Legacy University, The Gambia.**

Theft is a common phenomenon to all types of libraries, as guardians of intellectual freedom, librarians should be aware of items taken and protect the library resources. Maccomb (2004) noted that the library is not a viable resource to users if books notated in the catalogue are not on the shelf and that, it is loss of money and the librarians' time. Martell who has reported incidences of theft and its effect on libraries admitted theft as a serious problem in libraries. He identifies a number of strategies for checking resources security breach incidences like theft. He further advises library managers to combine planning strategies, policies and procedures with speed of action in order to combat resources security incidences like theft, and non-return of library resources. In other words Martell called for an enshrined resources security where staff and administrators have the will to act for the protection of information resources. Some authors have expressed concerns with the types of resources that bare being stolen in the library. The writers report both print and non-print resources as important targets in the library, In addition Holt, examines theft of information resources by users in a community and reports that, theft do frequently occur particularly on research and high demand materials such as special collections, rare books and manuscripts.

Forley reports that all libraries collections which includes books, journals, as well as rare books and archives are at risk of theft and mutilation. Most of these items are unique and have high monetary and historical value, and may therefore be irreplaceable. The issue of staff or insider making away with library resource has also been examined by Holt. Insider constitute criminals in any organization constituting those whose positions concealed their actions. In library context, they included regular staff, temporary and contract based staff.

**Measures to be adopted to curb the acts of Delinquencies of information resources in Legacy University, The Gambia.**

Security Measures to curb delinquencies of Library resources, any security attached to the academic library must ensure the safety of records and archival materials against human and natural agent. Constant vigilance on the part of library staff may help to secure library resources. Aina (2004) added that, "library materials must be safe; hence security devices need to be provided by library to ensure that materials are not stolen or mutilated". Abifarin (2007) and Bello (2007) reported high rate of book theft, mutilation and misplacing of books in Nigerian academic libraries. They suggested measures to reduce the problems, which include tightening security at library entrances and exits, expulsion of students involved in theft and mutilation, provision of multiple copies of heavily used text, reducing the cost of photocopying, and periodic searching of students' hostels and staff. Aguolu (2000) "observed that the best protection that a collection of books and non-book materials can have is a concrete building". Also Rajendra opined that the "library security should be planned when the library building is constructed wherever possible, through architectural considerations which include the site design and building design".

Nwalo (2003) asserted that, the following measures could help to reduce the rate of books theft in the library includes:

1. Constant supervision
2. Searching users at the library exit
3. Unannounced searching of students hostels
4. Posting security personnel of integrity to the library
5. Condemnation of theft through mass media
6. Vigilant against mutilation by library staff
7. Education of security men to detect stolen books through thorough physical examination of books.
8. Provision of wire gauzed to all library windows to make it very difficult for books to be thrown out.

McComb (2004) stated that video surveillance and closed-circuit television (CCTV) systems serve as a way to monitor and record security, deter crime, and ensure safety. The author suggest that, libraries can use CCTV to identify visitors and employees, monitor work areas, deter theft, and ensure the security of the premises and other facilities. The system can also be used to monitor and record evidence on clientele and employee misconduct. In the same vein Ramana (2010) contributed that "Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) uses in the libraries can enhance the ability to control the book thefts and tearing off the pages from the books and magazines".

**Research Methodology**

Methodology here involved the various methods, technique used by the researchers in analyzing data relevant to the topic in discussion. For any research to be conducted successfully, a considerable knowledge and understanding of the various

methods must be clearly understood so as to guide the researcher to which methods to use in carrying the research work. The method used was the survey research methods. **The population of this study comprises of students, academic and non – academic staff (two hundred and seven respondents) which represent students, Academic and non-Academic staff in Legacy University Library, The Gambia.** Due to the sizeable nature of the population the researchers adopted all the population. The questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. Two hundred and seven (207) questionnaire were administered to the respondents and collected back within three (3) weeks. The data that was collected was analyzed using table, frequency counts and percentages.

**Response Rate**

In this research, the total number of two hundred and seven (207) questionnaires were distributed to the respondents, which represented 100% response rate because they were all completed and collected back. The respondents were asked to choose as many options as appeal to them.

**Table 1:** Causes of Delinquency information resources in Legacy University, The Gambia

| S/N | Variable | Frequency | Percentage % |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | High cost of book | 32 | 15.5 |
| 2 | Lack of photocopying machine | 28 | 13.5 |
| 3 | Insufficient copies of information materials in the library | 34 | 16.4 |
| 4 | High demand of books | 38 | 18.4 |
| 5 | Increase in Educational Enrolment | 39 | 18.8 |
| 6 | Improper Orientation lectures for students and staff | 36 | 17.4 |
| | **Total** | **207** | **100** |

Table 1 shows the respondents opinions 39(18.8%) opine that due to over increase in educational enrolment of students the reading materials could not be enough for use. This was immediately followed by high demand for books 38(18.4%) cause by high cost of books 32(15.5%). In universities in Africa particularly Legacy University there are improper orientation lectures for students and staff, respondents 36(17.4%) observed this in relation to insufficient copies of information materials in the library respondents 34(16.4%) opine. This was also followed by lack of photocopying machine according to respondents 20(13.5%). This summarized that high cost of book, lack of photocopying machine, insufficient copies of information materials in the library, high demand of books, increase in Education Enrolment and improper orientation lectures for students and staff are the reasons for stealing information resources in Legacy university, The Gambia by both staff and students.

**Table 2:** Effect of Delinquency of information resources in Legacy University, The Gambia

| S/N | Variable | Frequency | Percentage % |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Reduction/Lost in value of intellectual materials | 31 | 24.2 |
| 2 | Inadequate information resource in the library | 36 | 28.1 |
| 3 | Discouragement of value in face of clientele | 28 | 21.9 |
| 4 | Inadequate library services | 33 | 25.8 |
| | **Total** | **128** | **100** |

Table 2 shows the effect of stolen/mutilation of information resources in Legacy University, The Gambia, Respondent 36(28.1%) posit to inadequate information resource in the library to serve the clients information needs. This also led to inadequate library services according to respondents 33(25.8%). This also led to reduction or lost in values of intellectual materials, respondents 31(24.2%). This according to respondents led to discouragement of value in face of clienteles 28 (21.9%). This implies that majority of the respondents express their opinion to the effects of stolen/mutilation of information materials to mean that the acts will certainly bring about the loss of its intellectual properties value, there will be reduction of information resources in the library, as well as losing its value in the face of the clienteles.

**Table 3:** Measures Adopted to Prevent to Prevent the Acts of Delinquency in Legacy University, The Gambia.

| S/N | Variable | Frequency | Percentage % |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Installation of CCTV camera | 38 | 20.5 |
| 2 | Provision of clients safety box at the entrance of library | 27 | 14.6 |
| 3 | Procurement of multiple copies of textbooks | 31 | 16.8 |
| 4 | Installation of electronic security door | 23 | 12.4 |
| 5 | Provision of stand by photocopy machine | 37 | 20 |
| 6 | Vigilant of Library security guards | 29 | 15.7 |
| | **Total** | **185** | **100** |

Table 3: show that 38(20.5%) of the respondents posit installation of CCT V as the method to be adopt to prevent stealing and mutilation in Legacy University, The Gambia. 31(16.8%) of the respondents opine procurement of multiple copies of textbooks, Respondents 37(20%) opine provision of stand by photocopy machine, respondents 29(15.7%) is of the opinion that Library security guards should intensify on more vigilant. Respondents 27(14.6%) express provision of clients safety box at the entrance of library while respondents 23(12.4%) express installation of electronic security door. This calls for emergency actions to save the face of the library resources from the hands of this pray by proving urgently installation of CCTV camera, dropping of bags at the safety box in entrance of the library, as well as vigilant of both security and library staff personnel by moving around the library.

**Findings:**

1. The study discovered that increase in educational enrolment, high demand of books, improper orientation lectures for students and staff, insufficient copies of information materials in the library, lack of photocopying machines and high cost of books were the causes of delinquency of information resources in Legacy University, The Gambia

**Implications:**

Economic depression and insecurity are the causes of theft and mutilation of library resources in Legacy University, The Gambia. Delinquency in library resources are

carried out through vandalism, humidity, sun and heat sneaking out of resources, hiding of books inside exercise book, in pockets, hiding of information resources in bags as well as tearing off page(s) have negative impact on proper services delivery.

2. The study discovered that the effect of delinquency of information resources in Legacy University, The Gambia are inadequate information resources in the library, inadequate library resources, reduction / lost in values of intellectual materials recorded the highest.

**Implication:**

Theft and mutilation leads to users' dissatisfaction, frustration in process of searching for resources and also discourages users from using the library.

3The study revealed that measures adopted to prevent the acts of Delinquency of information resources in Legacy University, The Gambia are provision of CCTV Camera, provision of stand by photocopy machines and provision of clients safety box at the entrance of the library.

**Implications:**

Dropping of bags at the safety box in the entrance of the library is the methods Staff adopt to prevent stealing and mutilation of information resources.

**Conclusion**

The study concluded that criminal drive is responsible for mutilation of library resources, dissatisfaction or unfamiliarity with library services, lack of knowledge of replacement costs and time, lack of concern for the need of others often may cause a library user to mutilate or damage resources. So therefore, information materials should be protected from thieves and mutilators.

**Recommendations**

The study recommended that:

1. Donations of information resources to students and staf2 and adequate supervision and monitoring terms in Legacy University library, The Gambia.
2. The library should provide multiple copies of textbooks available, photocopying machine to produce copies of page(s) needed to take home for review by student and staff at a cheaper rate, the need to educate library clients, periodic library orientations, conference on importance of information resources and its aftermaths mutilation effect to library services,.
3. More security personals, electronic securityE should be put in place like CCTV, Electronic doors, routine and rebooting check

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