



# LIBRARY CRIME CONTROL FOR EFFECTIVE LIBRARY SERVICES IN SELECTED TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN IMO STATE, NIGERIA

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** The researcher investigated library crime control for effective library services in selected tertiary institutions in Imo State. The researcher formulated three hypotheses. **Design/Methodology/Approach:** Descriptive survey research design was employed in this study. The area of the study is Imo State. The population and sample of this study is made up of the eighty-one (81) librarians working in the different academic libraries in Imo State. The instruments used to collect data for this study was a four (4)- point rating scale. The hypotheses were tested using t-test statistics.

**Findings:** The major findings of the study are as follows: the mean response score on the extent library crimes are committed in tertiary institutions in Imo State is significantly greater than the expected mean; the extent to which various library crime control measures are put in place in tertiary institutions in Imo State is significant; the various library services provided in the tertiary institutions in Imo State is significantly effective.

**Implications:** The implication of this finding to the library authorities and/or managers is that there is need to educate the students on the implication of committing such crimes and that they as well as the school are losing because of such crimes being committed.

**Originality/Value:** More effort should be made by the library staff and library management towards improving on already existing crime control measures to help minimize to a reasonable extent the crimes committed in libraries in tertiary institutions. The library staff and authorities should provide proper library education and orientation to students at their early stage in the tertiary institutions so as to help discourage them from engaging in library crimes.

**Keywords:** Crime Control, Effective Library Service, Library Crime, Library Services Tertiary Institutions

**Paper Type:** *Empirical Research*

## 1.0 Introduction

The library as an organization is designed to acquire, organize, preserve, and make available the recorded knowledge of man to the users. Library is the bedrock of any institution; its strength and weakness is judged basically on the collection. Libraries, over the years have been acknowledged as the pillar of academic excellence, which implies that the success of academic development in tertiary institutions depends on the quality of library services provided.

No doubt, a well-stocked, adequately staffed and well organized library is definitely the hallmark or *sine qua non* of a modern educational system because education without a library is tantamount to staging the famous Shakespearian play *HAMLET* without the Prince of Denmark (Ohayagha, 2014; Adekunle, Adekunjo & Umuabor, 2018).

Libraries, by virtue of providing social services, are exposed to all kinds of risks or violence. The commodity the

libraries promote are books and other information materials which are valuable and expensive and likely targets for criminal activities (Idris, Hassan & Abdul-Qadir, 2013). However, as a result of the diverse use of information materials in the academic library, users tend to constitute nuisance through, their destructive behaviour of mutilating, stealing and vandalizing of library resources for their selfish gains (Adekunle, Adekunjo & Umuabor, 2018). These destructive behaviours are categorized as crimes in libraries and information centres. Libraries as a social institution where people with different backgrounds and orientations come to seek for knowledge cannot be divorced with what is termed “library crimes”. In the process of providing library services to the various user components, crime may occur. In other words, no matter how sophisticated the security apparatus may seem to be, library crime remains an inevitable phenomenon anywhere in the world. Libraries, despite the cloistered air which ground them, have not been exempted from crime that seems to be endemic in the society (Ratcliffesas cited in Edom, 2012).

Library crime and control is a critical issue in the provision of library and information services. The issue of crime control is one of the aspects that the library as an institution needs to be proactive and pragmatic in its approach. The incidence and control of library crimes in libraries in tertiary institution is of serious concern to librarians. The success of libraries in meeting the needs of library users and provision of effective library services depends to a large extent on the control of library crimes. The need for effective library crime control is a paramount concern to library administrators. In our contemporary time, library crimes have affected the nature and type of library services provided in libraries. The rate at which crimes are committed in the academic libraries, public and private properties stolen,

call for a total overhaul of the security system in the libraries

However, the various library services may be affected by lack of crime control measures in academic libraries include the circulation of documents (use), librarian’s assistance, lending, reference, user education, interlibrary loans, short-term loans, bindery, photocopying, database and other information related services designed to ensure that library users have easy access to all that they desire without stress. No doubt, efficient library service delivery and protection of material resources induce reading and remain a fundamental building block for liberal education, providing a broad, basis for knowledge and understanding (Ohayagha, 2014).

Undeniably, library service is one of the most important educational services needed in an institution of higher learning. Such library is saddled with the responsibility of providing the vast information resources and services needed in the face of global information explosion. Around the globe, people consciously or unconsciously seek information for different needs and from varying sources. Information needs could range from educational, research, professional, recreational to pecuniary or for personal development. The media, internet and libraries seem to be the place of information seeking in contemporary societies (Okogwu & Nnam, 2013). Effective library services, according to Nnadozie (2007), are only possible when there is a qualitative, quantitative, adequate and relevant library resource. It goes without saying, therefore that satisfactory library and information services are impossible without adequate provision of library resources as envisaged by Johnson (2013). He also agreed with other authors that library resources include book information resources, among others. He included monographs, pamphlets,

journals, magazines, newspapers, ephemeral materials, clippings and vertical files, projects, theses, and dissertations, etc, as print resources while noting that the most prominent non-book resources include the audio-visual materials which are those information sources whose contents could be appreciated through the aural and ocular organs.

Nevertheless, as dangerous as library crime is to the provision of efficient library services in not just academic libraries but every other forms of libraries, it is quite disheartening to observe that not much research has been empirically carried out to unravel the relationship between library crimes and effective library service delivery as well as strategies for efficient library crime control. Though, evidence from literature points to existence of library crimes in various types of libraries and information centres, there has been no clear explanation on the nexus between library crimes and the provision of effective library services. It is against this background that this research was undertaken, to empirically unravel the relationship between library crime and control as correlate of effective library services.

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

In spite of the awareness of the impact of crime on library service delivery in libraries generally, there is this general notion that crime if not control has an adverse effect on library service delivery. Moreover, the extent to which crime is perpetrated in academic libraries is alarming and is a source of concern to the librarians, stakeholders and member of the academic community as a whole. This can be better appreciated when viewed against the backdrop of frequent reports of misplaced books on the shelves, mutilation of library materials, stealing of

library users' properties, hiding library materials, refusal to return borrowed resources, drinking and eating in the library, among others, have become common occurrences in libraries etc. What therefore agitates concerned persons and stakeholders is how librarians cope with these library crimes and its effects on library service delivery.

Despite the relevance of libraries in tertiary education, the resources and facilities of these libraries are being constantly threatened by criminal activities. Considering the dangers of this ugly element that has eaten deep into the fabrics of library services, the question now is: How do librarians curb this menace? How will they address the effects of this trend on the efficiency level of services being provided? Attempt to provide answers to the above questions necessitated this study with a view to x-ray library crimes, control for effective library services in selected tertiary institutions in Imo State, Nigeria.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The study generally tends to investigate library crime control for effective library services in selected tertiary institutions in Imo State, Nigeria. The study specifically addresses the following objectives:

1. Determine the extent library crimes are committed in tertiary institutions in Imo State, Nigeria.
2. Ascertain the various crime control measures adopted in the tertiary institutions under study.
3. Determine the influence of crime control to the effectiveness of library services in the tertiary institutions in Imo State, Nigeria.

### **1.4 Hypotheses**

The following null hypothesis will be tested in the study at 0.05 level of significance:

**H<sub>01</sub>:** The mean response score on the extent library crimes are committed in tertiary institutions in Imo State is not significantly greater than the expected mean of 42.50.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** The mean response on the extent to which various library crime control measures are put in place in tertiary institutions in Imo State is not significantly greater than the expected mean of 37.50.

**H<sub>03</sub>:** The mean response on the effectiveness of the various library services provided in the tertiary institutions in Imo State is not significantly greater than the expected mean of 27.50.

## 2.0 Review of Related Literatures

Several literatures by different scholars were reviewed under this section. Library crime can be used synonymously with terms such as library misconduct, anti-library behaviour. Library crime as *misconduct* can be defined as evil activities or anti-social behaviours that are detrimental to the progress and smooth operation of the library (Aniebo, 2004). Library crime is a serious problem that acts as an impediment to effective and efficient library operations. Every library has a crime problem. There are different forms of crimes witnessed in libraries and information centre both in developed and developing countries of the world. Crimes in libraries range from theft of books, other library materials and personal belongings of staff and users, to damage to books, library buildings, fittings and equipment, and violent attacks on staff and users, and other anti-social behaviour on library premises (*International Encyclopedia of Information and Library Science*, 2003).

Crime is an act or omission to act which flouts the core value, rules and regulations guiding a particular establishment (Okpokwasili, 2018). Library crime is a serious problem that acts as an impediment to effective and efficient library operations. Every library has a crime problem. In other words, library crime is a universal phenomenon, regardless of the type, size and location. Library crimes range from attacks on information resources, library equipment and facilities to attacks on library staff (Edom, 2012). Library crime in academic libraries is a global problem (Urhiewhu, Emojorho and Omah, 2018). Library crime is now an obvious but complex challenge in most libraries.

Criminal activities in academic libraries are not limited to library and information materials alone but theft of property such as handbags, purses, keys and notebooks are equally common (Akor, 2013; Idris, Hassan & Abdul-Qadir, 2013). Theft of library resource is among the serious challenges facing academic institutions in Nigeria. It has created a very big problem that is nearing epidemic stage as it costs academic institutions money and time to reproduce, replace, recopy and rebound stolen resources from the library (Njoku, Solomon-Uwakwe & Mbagwu, 2015). Vandalism is recognized as crime, when a person willfully damage or defaces the property of others or the commons. (Kalbande, Chavan & Golwal, 2003).

A critical look at the rate at which crimes are perpetrated in libraries points to the necessity of library crime control. Librarians must, adopt not just a pragmatic but a proactive approach to ensure that library crimes are reduced. Controlling of library crime is as old as library existence. As noted by Teferra (1996), protection of documents is a practice with a long history. For instance, keeping clay tablets and parchments in pots

in ancient Middle East and chain-locking volumes in the Europe of Middle Ages testify to the fact of the menacing losses.

Empirically, Jimoh (2014) examined the nature of delinquency among library staff and users in academic libraries: A study of University of Benin Library (John Harris Library) as a case study. The study revealed that delinquency is a serious problem confronting the library. Withholding, hiding of books and mutilation are the most serious delinquent acts. Insensitivity to the needs of others, inadequate numbers of books journals and fear of others who may borrow and not return are the major causes of delinquency. The study concluded that delinquency can be curb through searches, provision of more copies of books/journals and effective publicity exercise. In the same vein, Esievo (2007) carried out a study on “measures to curb delinquent acts in academic libraries in Kaduna state. The analysis indicates that the user orientation, surveillance within the library, formal user education and ensuring proper issuing of library materials. The study concludes that user delinquency in academic libraries in Kaduna State is a phenomenon that is likely to continue indefinitely, and that academic libraries must intensify their efforts and adopt more effectively methods of arresting the ugly situation in libraries.

In a separate study, Oyedum, Sanni and Udoakang (2014) carried out a study on “security and crime challenges in academic libraries in Nigeria”. Results revealed that book theft, noise-making and mis-shelving in the library and book mutilation are the major security breaches in the libraries. It also revealed among other findings that print materials, serial/ periodical collections, reference collections and reserve collections are vulnerable to security breaches. Similarly, Kumbhar and Veer (2016) carried out a research entitled study of vulnerable and delinquent activities in college libraries.

The study revealed that both library staff and users are involved in the various vulnerable and delinquent activities which include theft of collection, misplacement or book hiding, mutilation or tearing of pages. Also, it was revealed that staff human error as reason of library property loss, staff laziness in the checking of student identity card or personal belongings is one of the threats of library. More so, staff lack of security seriousness is reason for library loss, no sincere vigilance given by staff is weakness of library staff. The study concludes that every library needs to implement polices security systems, procedures, rules and regulation for dealing with safety and security concerns.

From another perspective, Nweke (2019) examines the “effect of theft and mutilation on the use of library collections in an academic library in Lagos state. Findings from this study revealed, among others, that the extent of theft and mutilation of library resources in academic libraries in Nigeria is very high, that high cost of books, lack of photocopying machine, porous library security system, lack of electronic security measures, lack of proper monitoring of students, unavailability of online databases, among others, are factors responsible for theft and mutilation of resources in academic libraries in Nigeria. Likewise, Dogara (2011) examined the Reference and information services delivery in academic libraries in Nasarawa State. Findings revealed that current Awareness services, Selective Dissemination of Information, Indexing and Abstracting were the major reference services provided with 3.16, 3.09, 2.82 and 2.70 respectively. Online catalogue and indeed ICT facilities were not available for reference and information services with 2.15 and 38.4.

The study by Lawal and Kanan (2021) examines “The accessibility, utilization and satisfaction of information

resources and services in Nigeria's agriculture university libraries". Key findings show that in the agriculture university libraries sampled, the existing agricultural information tools available, accessible and used are inadequate. Current information resources, particularly e-journals, e-books and loan times, agricultural information related information resources, such as databases, e-journals, e-books, as there was not much available for the established information needs. There was no access to adequate information resources for users because of the insufficient number of library employees.

From the reviews, the researcher noted that not much has been carried out on library crime control for effective library services and that no study (known to the researcher) has been found done specifically on library crime control for effective library services in academic libraries in Imo State. In the same vein, research on library crime control for effective library services in academic libraries in Imo State is rare in the literature. Finally, the present study x-rays library crime control and provision of effective library services in academic libraries under study. It is this perceivable gap in knowledge and literature that this study intends to fill.

### 3.0 Research Methods

The descriptive survey research design is used. The study is focused on library crimes, control for effective library services in selected tertiary institutions in Imo State, Nigeria. The study explored the nexus between library crimes, crime control and effective library services. Geographically, the study is limited to selected tertiary institutions in Imo State, which comprises: Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education (AIFCE), Owerri; Federal Polytechnic, Nekede (FPNO); Federal University of Technology Owerri,

(FUTO); Imo State Polytechnic, Umuagwo (ISPU); and Imo State University, Owerri (IMSU). Survey research design was used because of the application of a questionnaire in the collection of data. The population of this study is made up of the eighty-one (81) librarians working in the different academic libraries in Imo State. These academic libraries and their population of respondents. See appendix A. The researcher used the entire population as sample size in the study. The enumerative census techniques was adopted since the population from the various academic libraries chosen for the study is manageable. The instrument used to collect data for this study was four (4) - point rating scale. The measuring instrument was designed by the researcher based on the objectives of the study. The overall reliability coefficient is 0.693, which is high enough for the study.

The copies of measuring instrument were personally administered to the librarians with the help of research assistants from each institution. Each of the participating libraries was visited on a specific day and completed copies of the instruments were collected back from the participants. The entire data collection lasted for one month. To analyze the data on the objectives of the study, the researcher adopted the descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations). The research questions were using item-by-item mean, overall mean and expected mean.

### 4.0 Results and Discussions of Findings

Presented in this section are the analyses of data and results of such analyses. Data obtained by administering copies of the rating scales to the sampled librarians were summarized and presented in some of the tables below.

**Hypothesis One:** The mean response score on the extent library crimes are committed in

tertiary institutions in Imo State is not significantly greater than the expected mean of 42.50.

**Table 1: Calculated t-test Statistics for Testing the Difference between the Observed and the Expected Means**

<i>t<sub>cal</sub> - value<sub>crit</sub> Decision</i>					
14.567	42.50	80	0.05	1.664	H <sub>01</sub> is rejected

Table 1 is a t-test statistics table for testing the difference between the observed and the expected means scores. This table has a calculated t-test statistic of 14.567 which is greater than the tabulated t-test statistic of 1.664. The null hypothesis one is, therefore, rejected. This indicates that the mean response score on the extent library crimes are committed in tertiary institutions in Imo

State is significantly greater than the expected mean of 42.50.

**Hypothesis Two:** The mean response on the extent to which various library crime control measures are put in place in tertiary institutions in Imo State is not significantly greater than the expected mean of 37.50.

**Table 2: Calculated t-test Statistics for Testing the Difference between the Observed and the Expected Means**

<i>t<sub>cal</sub> - value<sub>crit</sub> Decision</i>					
4.808	37.50	80	0.05	1.664	H <sub>01</sub> is rejected

Table 2 is a summary t-test statistics table for testing the difference between the observed and the expected means scores. This table has a calculated t-test statistic of 4.808 which is greater than the tabulated t-test statistic of 1.664. The null hypothesis two is, therefore, rejected. This indicates that the mean response on the extent to which various library crime control measures are put in place in tertiary institutions in Imo State is significantly greater than the expected mean

of 37.50. This shows that the extent to which various library crime control measures are put in place in tertiary institutions in Imo State is significant.

**Hypothesis Three:** The mean response on the effectiveness of the various library services provided in the tertiary institutions in Imo State is not significantly greater than the expected mean of 27.50.

**Table 3: Calculated t-test Statistics for Testing the Difference between the Observed and the Expected Means**

<i>t<sub>cal</sub> - value<sub>crit</sub> Decision</i>					
7.279	27.50	80	0.05	1.664	H <sub>01</sub> is rejected

Table 3 is a summary t-test statistics table for testing the difference between the observed and the expected means scores. This table has a calculated t-test statistic of 7.279 which is greater than the tabulated t-test statistic of

1.664. The null hypothesis three is, therefore, rejected. This indicates that the mean response on the effectiveness of the various library services provided in the tertiary institutions in Imo State is not significantly

greater than the expected mean of 27.50. This shows that the various library services provided in the tertiary institutions in Imo State is significantly effective.

#### **4.1 Discussion of Findings in Relation to Analysis**

##### **The Extent Library Crimes Are Committed in Tertiary Institutions in Imo State**

The results of data analysis presented revealed that some of the library crimes are committed to a very high extent (VHE), while some to high extent (HE). The statistical test carried out revealed that mean response score on the extent library crimes are committed in tertiary institutions in Imo State is significantly greater than the expected mean. This means that the extent to which library crimes are committed in tertiary institutions in Imo State is significant. This is worrisome since if left unattended will live the libraries dilapidated or brought down to a sorry state. This will have discouraging effects on the serious library users, those who make good use of the library. This finding gave credence to the findings of Kumbhar and Veer (2016), Jimoh (2014) and Oyedum, Sanni and Udoakang (2014) who found that there was a high level delinquency in public libraries in their study area.

##### **The Extent to which the Various Library Crime Control Measures in Tertiary Institutions are put in Place**

The finding of the study revealed that nine out of the fifteen library crime control measures listed are put in place in the tertiary institutions libraries in Imo State. The statistical test carried out revealed that the mean response on the extent to which various library crime control measures are put in place in tertiary institutions in Imo State is significantly greater than the expected mean. This shows that the extent to which various library crime control measures are put in

place in tertiary institutions in Imo State is significant. However, the library crimes control measures that are not put in place are those that may go a long way in curbing crimes in the libraries. Among these measures are deployment of Close Circuit Television (CCTV), imposition of heavy fines or overdue defaulters, enactment and enforcement of strong library rules, use of electronic detection systems, and reduction in cost of photocopy. This finding is in line with the findings of Nweke (2019), Esievo (2017) and Oyedum, Sanni and Udoakang (2014) who found that some of the measures put in place in the libraries.

##### **Effectiveness of the Various Library Services Provided in the Tertiary Institutions in Imo State**

The results of data analysis presented revealed that eight out of the eleven library services listed are provided in tertiary institutions in Imo State. The statistical tests carried out revealed that the mean response on the effectiveness of the various library services provided in the tertiary institutions in Imo State is not significantly greater than the expected mean. This finding shows that the various library services provided in the tertiary institutions in Imo State is significantly effective. However, library services such as inter-library loan services, technical services, and e-Library services are not provided. This finding is in line with the findings of Dogara (2011) and Lawal and Kanan (2021) for found that library services are significantly provided in academic libraries.

##### **Educational Implications of the Findings**

The finding of the study on the extent library crimes are committed in tertiary institutions libraries imply that there is high rate of crime in the libraries and that majority of the library information resources are at danger of being stolen or destroyed. The

implication of this finding to the library authorities or management and the school proprietors is that there is need to do something more serious and modern to protect the library information resources from being stolen. Another implication is that if left unchecked the information resources may be stolen or destroyed to the point that the library users will become discourage from using the libraries. The finding of the study on the major perpetrators of library crimes imply that students who are the major users of the libraries are also the major perpetrators of crimes. The implication of this finding to the library authorities and/or managers is that there is need to educate the students on the implication of committing such crimes and that they as well as the school are losing because of such crimes being committed.

The finding of the study on the control measures in the libraries implies that some crime control measures are put in place the tertiary institutions libraries to help curb the crime committed against library resources. The finding also implies that some major and more advanced control measures are not in place to help control library crimes. The implication of this finding to the library staff and the library authorities is that there is need to mount more measures in the libraries to help curb the high rate crimes.

Another implication of the findings is that a good number of library services are provided in the libraries in tertiary institutions in Imo State. These services would in turn impact positively on the study and research performances of library user, thus leading to the achievement of the institutions main objectives. The study would help the reference librarian to improve in their services to their patrons.

## **Conclusion**

The researcher investigated library crime control for effective library services in selected tertiary institutions in Imo State. The researcher observed that despite library instructions and orientation given to students, the rate of library crime is still on the increase. The major findings of the study shows that some of the library crimes are committed to a very high extent (VHE), while some to high extent (HE). The mean response on the extent to which various library crime control measures are put in place in tertiary institutions in Imo State is not significantly greater than the expected mean. This shows that the extent to which various library crime control measures are put in place in tertiary institutions in Imo State is significant. The mean response on the effectiveness of the various library services provided in the tertiary institutions in Imo State is significantly greater than the expected mean. This shows that the various library services provided in the tertiary institutions in Imo State is significantly effective.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher made the following recommendations:

1. More effort should be made by the library staff and library management towards improving on already existing crime control measures to help minimize to a reasonable extent the crimes committed in libraries in tertiary institutions.
2. The library staff and authorities should provide proper library education and orientation to students at their early stage in the tertiary institutions so as to help discourage them from engaging in library crimes.
3. Both state and federal governments should assist the academic libraries by providing the needed modern ICT facilities such as Closed Circuit

Television (CCTV), Radio Frequency Identification (RFID), Electronic Security System (ESS) that are not already provided in the libraries for curbing library crimes.

4. Efforts should be made the library management and staff to provide those libraries services that are not effectively provided such as inter-library loan services, technical services, and e-Library services.
5. Adequate training should be provided to library staff on the literacy and skills need for the deployment of available CCTV and other modern crime control measures in the libraries.

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**APPENDIX A  
POPULATION OF STUDY**

***Population of Librarians in the Institutions under Study***

S/No	Name of Institution	No. of Librarians
1	Federal University of Technology, Owerri	33
2	Federal Polytechnic Nekede, Owerri	6
3	Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri	15
4	Imo State University, Owerri	15
5	Federal College of Land Resources and Technology (FECOLART), Oforola	5
6	Imo State Polytechnic, Umuagwo	7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>81</b>

**Source:** Visit to the various libraries.

