Chapter 15

Perceptions and Attitude of Students in Relation to Vandalism in University Libraries in South-South Zone of Nigeria

Owajeme Justice Ofua
Delta State University, Nigeria

Ogochukwu Thaddaeus Emiri
Delta State University, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted in December 2010 to find out students perception and attitude toward vandalism in the library. To gather the required information, a questionnaire was distributed to 1400 randomly selected students of university libraries in the South-South zone of Nigeria out of which 718 responded. Results of their responses revealed that vandalism of library materials in the form of theft, mutilation and hiding of books and journals, is largely regarded as a form of academic survival, this makes student to put up "I Don't care" attitude to library materials. The major causes of vandalism of library materials include limited library collections; restrictions in the use of some materials; number and duration of loans; insufficient number of copies of recommended textbooks; unaffordable cost of personal textbooks; high cost of photocopying as well as peer-influence. Amongst others, researchers recommend the following: training and retraining programme for users, extension of loan period; adequate funding; robust security measures and punishment of offenders.

INTRODUCTION

Vandalism is a problem that affects libraries of all types. As custodian of library collections, it is part of librarians' responsibility to ensure they are adequately informed in order to prevent vandalism as much as possible and to be prepared in the inevitable event that vandalism occurs in their libraries (Heat, 2003). The threat of intellectual properly through theft vandalism, mutilation and other forms of abuse has posed tremendous challenge to the library profession worldwide. Incidents of theft, non-return of materials and mutilation of library stock are on the increase (Jackson, 1991). According to Salaam and Onitade (2010), Vandalism of library materials has been an age- long problem of libraries. This takes the form of ripping off pages of books and documents, deliberate defacement of materials and sabotage of library equipments and outright theft of books and other library materials and equipment. Unlike professional thieves who steal for economic reasons, some library patrons vandalize library materials for selfish motive. Others rip of pages of books because they cannot afford the cost of the book or they cannot fine particular books anywhere else. Vandalism of books and non-books materials are a common phenomenon in Nigerian University libraries and if not checked will increase a serious threat to Nigerian Libraries collection and preservations. This study, therefore sought to find out student perception and attitude to vandalism in the south-south university libraries of Nigeria.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Various writers have expressed their view on what contributes to the cause of different forms of abuse in the library. However, many researchers bases their argument on economic depress and security as the main cause of abuse of library materials. These include Ajegbomogun (2004), Agboola (2001), Afolabi (1993), Akinfolarin (1992), and Bello (1997) among others. Others authors reveal that theft is motivated by societal problems. Verner (1983) listed a series of factors that contribute to library malpractices which include in adequate services staff at night and during the weekends, lack of multiple copies of library materials in high demand and inadequate photocopying facilities. Any shift from this, may cause a negative impact on users' disposition to library materials. According to Goldstein (1996) identified three central concepts of vandalism: Intentionality, destructiveness and property ownership. Therefore, Vandalism is intentional act of destruction or defacement of property not one's own.

Goldstein (1996), Cohen (1989), Lincolin (1996), and Cornog and Perper (1996) recognized six categories of Vandalism, many of which are common in libraries which include:

- Acquisitive Vandalism, this involves acts done to obtain property or money. Example of acquisitive vandalism that may occur in libraries include damages to parking meters, public telephones, vending machines and photocopiers.
- Tactical vandalism: it includes act done to accomplish goals other than monetary gain, such as defacement of material by a student to prevent the use of that material by fellow student
- Ideological Vandalism: which is an act done in promotion of a social, political or other cause such as the placement of KKK stickers within materials in a library.
- Vindictive Vandalism: involves acts to gain revenge.
- Play vandalism, it include acts of destruction or disfigurement in the course of play, such as a group of students who decide to play target practice with library windows
- Malicious vandalism, these acts express rage or frustration such as library might encounter includes the clogging of toilets or sinks, setting off five alarms or sprinkler systems or urinating in public areas.

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