

***Perception and Attitude of Library Staff Towards Security of Information Resources in the University of Calabar Library, Calabar, Nigeria***

**James Ogom Odu, Ph.D**

*Department of Library and Information Science*

*Faculty of Education*

*University of Calabar, Calabar*

*Cross River State, Nigeria*

[ogomjodu@yahoo.com](mailto:ogomjodu@yahoo.com)

**Abstract**

*The study employed the survey research design to assess the perception and attitude of library staff towards safety of information resources in the University of Calabar library. Questionnaire and direct observation methods were the instruments used for data collection while the library staff form the population of the study. There were 231 staff in the library, out of which 220 were accessible while 11 staff said to be on leave at the time of the study were not accessible. This put the sample size at 220 respondents. The questionnaire was administered directly while the data derived was analyzed using simple percentages (%). The finding reveals negative perception of security as the duty of library porter and management staff; poor staff attitudes towards security of information resources; mutilation and theft of library resources have remained a persistent challenge in the library and there are no modern security devices to help mitigate the security challenges. The study recommends the use of electronic security system: CCTV, electronic doors, and the use of Bar Code Machines to secure library resources. Besides, library staff should be given orientation on security consciousness and the need to embrace security as the responsibility of all staff.*

**Keywords:** Perception, Attitude, Security, information, Resources, University, Library

**Introduction**

Security is the absence of threat, harm or danger due to good measures put in place to protect persons, property and information resources from any adverse influence. Security is a multifaceted and interdisciplinary concept whose meaning and application could be contextualized. In this study, security is treated solely as safety measures that guarantee protection of information resources in libraries. In our contemporary society, security challenges have persistently and appreciably increased in frequency, sophistication, magnitude and scope. Some facets of the society are

plagued with recurrent security challenges in different ramifications, leading to concerns and various approaches to stem the tide or nip the incidences in the bud.

Libraries have continued to experience a surge in security challenges especially in the developing countries of which Nigeria is a quintessential part. Isebe (2015) noted that these problems have remained unabated, despite the fact that series of efforts and resources have been deployed by librarians and information specialists to stop these unwholesome acts. Security challenges in libraries manifest in two broad categories: those that occur naturally and those that are man-made. The challenges that occur naturally are: flood, wind storm, fire outbreak and collapse of buildings, among others. Those that are man-made are: theft, mutilation, defacing of books, disobedience to rules and regulations, aggressive patrons, etc. These challenges are potent enough to threaten, harm or damage the resources in a library; leading to great losses to the library and frustration to library clients. It becomes imperative therefore, to put in place relevant security measures to forestall or prevent the occurrence of such challenges as well as mitigate the magnitude of damages where such occurrence could not be averted.

Information resources are valuable assets to the library and if properly organized, in terms of adequacy, currency and scope, they could become the substance that gives value to the library and satisfaction to the library clients. With this, library users will always have reasons to visit such a library again and again. This is because the worth of any library depends on the extent of utilization of its resources, services and the satisfaction derived by users. In other words, a library with a state of the arts resources that is not utilized is worthless. The resources available in a library should be safeguarded in order to be available for immediate and future use. The choice of security devices used in libraries, their functionality and efficiency are a function of availability of funds, technological advancement, human capita development, staff perception and attitude towards security of information resources in the library.

Perception is the understanding, interpretation, thinking and impression one has about something, leading to thought, belief and opinion of the issue under consideration. Such thoughts, beliefs and opinions could shape and influence the attitude exhibited towards the issue under consideration. Therefore, perception could have significant influence on the attitudes exhibited. Library staff perception of security of information resources connotes what invariably underscores their thought, beliefs and opinions of security of information resources in the library and by extension their attitudes towards the safety of these resources.

Information resources are valuable, costly and diverse in nature. It takes a lot of investment in monetary terms and in human capital to set up a library that can, to a reasonable extent, address the information needs of users in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Information resources could be seen as the information bearing resources (books, journals, reports, newspapers, magazines, government publications, novels, among others); sources that lead to the actual information (bibliographies, abstract, indexes, the catalogue), as well as resources that support the use of information (computer systems, internet access, among others). These resources can further be classified into print resources, electronic resources and information and communication technology resources. It is therefore imperative for libraries to have appropriate security measures in place to guarantee safety and security for these valuable resources in the library. However, the efficiency of available security devices depends on the perception and attitude of library staff, their involvement in providing security for the information resources in the library and their general level of security consciousness.

Security of information resources should be seen as a collective responsibility of all library staff, irrespective of their qualification, designation or status. Where library staff is security conscious, every staff would act as a watch dog and will respond positively to any perceived or real security breach in any part of the library. This positive disposition towards security consciousness could be a reflection of how library staff perceives security and the need to safeguard the information resources in the library. Their perception will manifest in their attitude towards the safety concerns envisaged and the desire to fix or address such concerns in the general interest of the library, its workers and users. However, library staff may have negative attitudes towards the security of information resources in the library, arising from their perception of security as the responsibility of designated staff. This perception would influence their attitude towards security concerns and the safety of information resources in the library. So many security devices could be employed in academic libraries, like the University of Calabar library, as safety measure for the invaluable information resources in the library, ranging from firefighting equipment, smoke detection devices, flood control mechanism, installation of Close Circuit TV (CCTV), the use of Bar Code Machines and the use of human porters at the entrances of the library. Each of these devices or a combination of some of them could provide the much needed security of information resources that had eluded academic libraries in the developing countries including Nigeria. The security devices put in place notwithstanding, their efficiency and effectiveness depends on staff perception of security, their security consciousness and attitudes towards the safety of information resources.

The University of Calabar was established in 1975 and has since grown to become a prominent tertiary institution in Nigeria. It has a library that has become the centre of attraction and a beehive of activities for students, staff, researchers and visiting scholars. The library has a rich collection of print resources in terms of adequacy, currency and scope. At present, an electronic Unit of the library was commissioned in 2012 to complement the physical resources (Bassey & Odu, 2015).

According to Aina (2004), library resources or materials must be safe; hence security devices must be made available by libraries to ensure that the materials are not stolen or mutilated. Ajegbomogun (2004) identified the types of security breaches in university libraries, which included theft and book mutilation and reasoned the cause to be security lapses, insufficient or limited number of essential materials, and user's financial constraints. Salaam (2004), Ajayi and Omotayo (2004), and Maidabino (2010) reported poor staff perception of security breaches and lack of awareness of collection security incidences in university libraries. Omoniyi (2001) found that both students and staff were often involved in collection theft and this may be due of their unawareness of the gravity of the thieving issue. Holt (2007) highlighted theft of library collections by staff as a real problem that libraries should address and not ignore because of the risk of bad publicity; the author identified several such incidents as (i) theft of physical materials (ii) theft or alteration of data and (iii) theft of money as major security crime in libraries. Other forms of breaches include non-return of items by borrowers, theft of library equipment, theft of personal effects (from staff and users), verbal and physical abuse against staff and users, and vandalism against library buildings, equipment and stock destruction, all of which can directly or indirectly affect the provision of library services.

Attitudes are inclinations and feelings, prejudices or bias, preconceived notions, ideas, fears and convictions about any specific topic (Taiwo as cited by Adekunle, Omoba & Tella, 2007). He opined that attitude is a mental and neutral state of readiness organized through experience exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon individuals' response to all objects or situation with which it is associated. A person's attitude towards an issue or object can be judged from his/her behaviour in situation involving the objects or issue in question.

According to Adamu (2006), security refers to devices designed to guard library materials against crime, accident, disasters, fire and attack. Security awareness should be formalized in organization's policy and procedures and communicated to every employee who works with information resources (Saffady, 2005). Akussah and Benti

(2010) recommended that libraries should invest more in electronic resources, which will reduce, to a large extent, the incidence of users physically handling documentary materials. With regards to the perception, value and attitudes of staff towards security of information resources, all of the university librarians agreed and showed positive perception, value and attitudes towards security concerns (Maidabino & Zainab, 2011). Abiola and Omolara (2013) found that library staff are part of the challenges facing library security management because they also engage in collection theft and since they are part of the system, it is easier for them to carry out the operation without being caught. Similarly, Fasae and Adedokun (2016) found that materials are sometimes deliberately or unintentionally abuse in libraries by ways of stealing, theft, mutilation, vandalism, defacement, folding of pages, hiding of books, and so on. Similar studies that reported cases of insecurity of library resources includes: Ugah (2007), Aguolu (2002), Eruvwe, Akpojotor and Okonoko (2015), and Anyaobi and Akpoma, (2012).

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were set to guide the study:

1. What is the perception of library staff about security of information resources in the University of Calabar Library?
2. What is the attitude of library staff towards security concerns in the University of Calabar Library?
3. What are the security challenges most frequently experienced in the University of Calabar Library?
4. What are the causes of insecurity of information resources in the University of Calabar Library?
5. What are the security measures put in place to guarantee a secure library environment in the University of Calabar Library?

### **Methodology**

This study employed the survey research design to assess the perception and attitude of library staff towards the safety of information resources in the University of Calabar library. Library Staff Perception and Attitudes Towards Safety of Information Resources Questionnaire (LSPATSIRQ) and direct observation methods were the instruments used for data collection. The questionnaire had an introductory section and four other sections with six items each, giving a total of twenty four items in the instrument. The instrument was validated by two experts in Measurement and Evaluation to ensure that the items in the instrument were good enough to measure the variables they were intended to measure. Library staff constitutes the population of the

study. There were 231 staff in the University of Calabar library at the time this study was conducted. The entire population was used for the study. A total of 220 staff were accessible for the study while 11 staff, said to be on leave at the time of the study could not be reached. This leaves the sample size at 220 respondents. The questionnaires were administered directly within a period of 27 days while the data derived from the questionnaire and direct observation were analyzed using simple percentages (%).

### **Presentation and discussion of findings**

**Research question 1:** What is the perception of library staff about security of information resources in the University of Calabar Library?

The findings on library staff perception of security and safety of information resources in the University of Calabar library is presented in table 1.

**Table 1:** Library staff perception of security and safety of information resources in the University of Calabar Library

<b>Items</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Security of information resources is the duty of all staff	18	8.2
Security of information resources is the duty of security staff	29	13.2
Security of information resources is the duty of management	54	24.5
Security of information resources is the duty of library porters	119	54.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>100</b>

As shown in table 1, a total of 119 respondents, representing 54.1% perceived security of information resources in the University of Calabar library as the responsibility of library porters; 54 respondents, representing 24.5% perceived security of information resources to be the responsibility of library management; 29 respondents, representing 13.2% perceived it to be the duty of security staff while 18 respondents, representing 8.2% perceived security of information resources as the responsibility of all library staff. This finding reveals that staff of the University of Calabar Library have negative perception about the security of information resources in the library. They perceived it to be the duty of library porters, library management staff and security staff of the University. This negative perception, no doubt, has the potentials of compromising the security system and putting the resources in the library at great risk of theft, mutilations and defacing of information resources. This perception will in practical terms,

influence their attitude towards security concerns and how they respond to such concerns in the library. However, there were few respondents who rightly perceived security concerns as the responsibility of all. This category of staff have shown genuine regards and value for security in the overall scheme of things and as a safeguard for the information resources in the library.

**Research question 2:** What is the attitude of library staff towards security concerns in the University of Calabar Library?

The findings on the attitude of library staff towards safety of information resources in the University of Calabar Library is presented in table 2.

**Table 2:** Attitude of library staff towards safety of information resources in the University of Calabar Library

Items	N	%
I ignore security challenges because they are not part of my job description	76	32.7
I confront security challenges and refer them to the appropriate authority	11	5
I show concern about security challenges if I am involved	55	25
I do not monitor what users do in the library	40	18.2
I support the porters in addressing security breaches	7	3.2
I allowed porters to do their work where there are security breaches	31	14.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>100</b>

As shown in table 2, 76 respondents, representing 32.7%, do not show concern for security issues which they perceive to be out of their job description. 11 respondents, representing 5% of the study population would simply refer security breaches to the appropriate authority. 55 respondents, representing 25% of the population, show concern about security breaches only if they were affected directly, while 40 respondents representing 18.2% of the population do not care about what the users are doing in the library. 7 respondents, representing 3.2% admitted showing solidarity and support to library porters whenever security breaches were identified, while 31 respondents, representing 14.1% prefer to allow library porters do their work whenever security breaches were identified. The findings portray library staff attitudes towards security of information resources as poor, apathetic and devoid of any form of responsibility towards safety and security concerns in the library. It is reflective of how

library staff in the University of Calabar perceive security and safety of information resources. Majority do not regard security as the responsibility of all since there were staff working as library porters.

**Research question 3:** What are the security challenges most frequently experienced in the University of Calabar Library?

The most frequent security challenges identified in the University of Calabar Library are presented in table 3.

**Table 3:** The most frequent security challenges experienced in the University of Calabar Library

<b>Items</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Book theft	71	32.3
Mutilation of information resources	80	36.4
Fire outbreak	23	10.4
Disobeying library rules and regulation	11	5
Staff collaboration with outsiders to sell library books	13	5.9
Theft of personal effects of staff and students	22	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>100</b>

As shown in table 3, mutilation of library books and other information resources was ranked highest by 80 respondents, representing 36.4%, book theft was ranked next by 71 respondents, representing 32.3%. Other security challenges experienced in the University of Calabar library were fire outbreak, 23 respondents (10.0%); theft of personal effects of staff and users, 22 respondents (10%); library staff colluding with outsiders to sell library books, 13 respondents (5.9%); and disobedience of library rules and regulations, 11 respondents, representing 5% of the respondents. Mutilation and theft of library resources have remained a persistent challenge in libraries, especially in the developing countries. The finding here agrees with Aguolu (2002) who reported that high incidence of book-theft and mutilation in academic libraries are gradually depleting available information resources. Similarly, Ugah (2007) identifies major security issues in libraries to include theft and mutilation, vandalism, damage and disaster. In a similar study, Holt (2007) found that theft of library collection by staff is a real problem that libraries should address and not ignore because of the risk of bad publicity. Fasae and Adedokun (2016) found that materials are sometimes deliberately or unintentionally abused in libraries by ways of stealing, theft, mutilation, vandalism, defacement, folding of pages, hiding of books, and so on.

**Research question 4:** What are the causes of insecurity of information resources in the University of Calabar Library?

The findings on the causes of insecurity of information resources in the University of Calabar library are presented in table 4.

**Table 4:** The causes of insecurity of information resources in the University of Calabar Library

<b>Items</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Some library users are selfish	20	9.1
Lack of supervision of library users	35	15.9
Poor attitudes of library staff towards security concerns	50	22.7
Inadequate security measures	82	37.3
Staff colludes with outsiders to steal information resources	7	3.2
Inadequate resources in the library	11	5
Absence of photocopying facility	15	6.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>100</b>

As shown in table 4, inadequate security measures had 82 respondents, representing 37.3%; poor attitudes of library staff towards security concerns had 50 respondents, representing 22.7%; lack of supervision of library users had 35 respondents, representing 15.9%; selfishness of some library users had 20 respondents, representing 9.1%; absence of photocopying facility had 15 respondents, representing 6.8%; inadequate resources in the library had 11 respondents, representing 5% while staff colluding to steal information resources had 7 respondents, representing 3.2% of the respondents. The finding agrees with Eruvwe, Akpojotor and Okonoko (2015) who gave the reasons for persistent stealing and mutilation of library materials as follows: 91% were in support of limited/scarcity of materials, 87.0% were in support of selfish interest, 92.6% were in support of ignorance, 40.8% were in support of financial constraint and 67.0% embraced lack of photocopying facilities in the library while 94.0% were in support of lack of understanding between the users and the library staff. Anyaobi and Akpoma (2012) found that selfishness was one of the main factors responsible for the insecurity of library materials, followed by inadequate number of multiple copies of library materials, high cost of or absence of photocopying facility.

**Research question 5:** What are the security measures put in place to guarantee a secure library environment in the University of Calabar Library?

The findings on the security measures put in place to safeguard information resources in the University of Calabar library through direct observation is presented in table 5.

**Table 5:** The security devices in the University of Calabar Library and their functionality

<b>Items</b>	<b>Availability</b>	<b>Functionality</b>
Library Porters	Available	Average
Fire extinguishers	Available	Defective
Window protectors	Available	Not Perfect
Door protectors	Available	Not in all doors

As shown in table 5, the security devices available in the University of Calabar Library, their effectiveness and functionality leave much to be desired. The use of library porters at the entrance of each section of the library appears to be the major safeguard for available resources in the library. The library runs two shifts in the reading areas where two porters were to be on duty in each section per shift. Regrettably, some sections have one porter per shift. This situation cannot guarantee effective safeguard for the information resources in the library. For obvious reasons, a porter may have reasons to attend to realistic and urgent personal needs. Under this circumstance, the porter may leave to attend to such needs at the detriment of the safety of library resources or choose to ignore his personal needs and risk being absent minded, work with low morale and with lack of concentration to the detriment of the security and safety of library resources.

Besides, there were fire extinguishers at some locations across different parts of the library. However, most of the fire extinguishers were defective and useless. There are protectors and wire gauze in the windows to check unlawful removal of library materials through the windows. This in itself is a good idea, but the wire gauze is torn and therefore cannot serve its purpose. The same scenario played out in the door protectors. There were many doors without such protectors and in some cases, tables were used to support the doors from inside while the staff will use alternative door during closing hours.

Modern security devices that relied on electric systems were not available. There were no Close Circuit TV (CCTV), no Bar code machines, no electronic doors and no smoke

detecting machines. These are the contemporary security devices employed to safeguard information resources in libraries of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The CCTV could be used to monitor the activities of library users from a remote end of the library. It is possible to grant access to all library management staff to watch the reading areas of the library from their mobile devices, irrespective of their location at any given time. The use of Bar Code could detect and prevent unauthorized removal of information resources from the library. All these devices, despite their efficiency in addressing security challenges in libraries, were not available in the University of Calabar Library.

### **Conclusion and recommendation**

Security of information resources in academic libraries in developing countries has remained a burning issue that appears to have defied solutions. So much is being invested in academic libraries in terms of funding and human capital development to reposition them to measure up to the information needs of users in contemporary time. These libraries continued to lose their prized asset through book theft, mutilations and defacing of information resources. This persistent problem appears to be aggravated by the poor perception and attitudes of library staff towards security issues and the collusion of some staff to compromise the safety of information resources in the University of Calabar Library. The non-application of contemporary electronic security gadgets has continued to create a leeway for deviancy and misuse of information resources in the University of Calabar Library. It has become imperative to invest more in the use of electronic security system, the use of CCTV, electronic doors, and the use of Bar Code Machines to secure library resources. Besides, library staff should be given orientation on security consciousness and the need to embrace security as the responsibility of all staff.

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