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**LIBRARY DESIGN,
STRUCTURAL ORGANISA-
TION AND MANAGEMENT
AS DETERMINANTS
OF STUDENTS'
MALPRACTICES IN
CAMEROONIAN**

ABSTRACT

Library malpractices have been found to have deleterious effects on effective library services in university libraries. This study aims at identifying the crimes in Cameroonian university libraries, the extent of such malpractices and the factors that account for such malfeasance. This study holds that library design, structural and functional organisation and their daily management are major determinants of their levels of malpractices. The study focuses on the libraries of university of Yaounde I and Buea for obvious reason. they represent different educational systems and traditions. Observations and interviews were used to collect data for the study. Descriptive and analytic statistical techniques were used to analyse the data.

The study revealed that both libraries experience crimes such as theft, mutilation, disrespect of library rules, assaults, displacement, eating, drinking, impersonation and noise making. However, the frequency of occurrence was six times higher in the Yaounde I library than in the university of Buea. The reasons that accounted for these variations were; design of the library building, the structural and functional organisation of the libraries and the services that were being offered by both libraries. A number of suggestions were made to reduce crime to its barest minimum.

Key-words : Library design, organisation management, determinants, malpractices, Cameroonian Universities.

RÉSUMÉ

Les mauvaises habitudes de bibliothèque ont mis au jour des effets nocifs sur des services dans les bibliothèques universitaires. La présente étude vise à identifier les délits de bibliothèques dans les universités camerounaises et les conséquences de telles pratiques afin de déraciner les facteurs qui en sont les causes. Elle s'est appuyée sur les hypothèses relatives à la configuration, l'organisation structurelle et fonctionnelle ainsi que la gestion quotidienne des bibliothèques universitaires. Ces hypothèses sont les déterminants du niveau de nuisance observé chez les usagers.

Les bibliothèques universitaires de Yaoundé I et de Buéa ont constitué les champs d'investigation du fait de leurs différences dans le systèmes et les traditions.

Les données collectées par l'observation et les interviews ont été analysées selon les méthodes de statistiques descriptive et analytique.

Au terme de cette analyse, il ressort que les délits dans ces bibliothèques universitaires sont : le vol, la mutilation, le déplacement des documents, la violation des procédures, les agressions, les nuisances sonores, l'introduction d'aliments et de boisson dans les salles de lecture ainsi que le manque de professionnalisme du personnel de bibliothèque.

En dépit de tout, ces délits sont inégalement répartis dans les bibliothèques de Yaoundé I et de Buéa. Ils sont six fois plus récurrents à Yaoundé qu'à Buéa. La raison de cet état de chose sont la configuration des locaux de bibliothèque, son organisation structurelle et fonctionnelle et les services offerts aux usagers.

Enfin, des suggestions sont faites en vue de l'amélioration de cette situation en réduisant ces délits à leur strict minimum.

INTRODUCTION

Universities the world over, basically have the same functions namely; teaching, research, publication, conservation of knowledge and support of the national development system. For these diverse and varied missions to be achieved, each university needs a worth while library, whose basic mission is to support and advance the functions of the university.

The importance of the university library is summarized by Alex Kwayaong of the university of Ghana who wrote "*The university library is the aorta of any university. Its academic health, intellectual validity and effectiveness closely depends on the health, state and excellence of its library*". The above stand is fostered by Shelby Foot Who holds that "*a university is just a group of buildings gathered around a library*".

The basics of contemporary librarianship in general and that of the university library in particular centres on Ranganathan's five laws of librarianship, Four of which are user-centred.

This is the reason why elements like library design, organisation and functioning will individually or collectively determine the way the university library users in general, and students in particular use or misuse the library.

Library design simply implies the development of strategy and procedure required to set up a library and the creative development of the structure which is a sequence of logical steps geared at setting up a functional library. Organisation will imply the functional departmentalisation and the accompanying job descriptions in the various services. Functioning on the other hand would entail how the various departments, services and units, work together on a daily bases as a system to achieve its laid down goals.

It is obvious, that all design precautions taken in the course of constructing a new library like that of the university of Yaounde I should mainly aim at serving the user. This holds the same for the structural organisation and subsequent definition of the various duties in all services. Above all, the day to day running (functioning) of the library should have as its

main focus the satisfaction of the clients for whom the library was built.

This notwithstanding, and though much is done to satisfy the information needs of university students, the way they make use of the library is not often in consonance with the ethics of appropriate library practice. This has therefore given rise to what has been variously called library malpractices, abuse, crime and delinquent acts.

Since the 1980s, librarians have universally become more apprehensive of the progressively deteriorating breach of trust being manifested by their clients. They have become more worried by their patrons' delinquent acts which now threaten the resources and services of their respective libraries. Crime has now been identified as a major social problem facing African university libraries in particular.

THE PROBLEM

Enormous investments are being made on contemporary university libraries in a bid to satisfy the users. These take the form of books, journals, non print materials, shelves, library furniture, computers, both hardware and software, office equipment, information technology equipment, internet etc.

The proper use of such investment is crucial to the success or failure of providing good library services to the patrons.

Unfortunately and coincidentally, the problems of user malpractices have become a custom all over the library world, though at varying levels among different libraries. Most studies have not only reported the grievousness of the problem, but have also only limited themselves to the dangers posed to these hard earned materials by the antisocial acts of their patrons. This is most serious in Africa where library budgets have been in a decline since the 1980s. Most surveys like those of Akapata (1979), line (1969), Ikonta (1980) and Bean (1992) have mostly emphasized only the types of crimes commonly committed. Some others like Mowat(1982) and Bakewell (1990) rather focused on user centred reasons like the hikes in prices of books that encourage library abuse. However, a closer look at the acts points to the fact that these abuses are library

specific. This investigation intends to take this study away from the obvious. Thus the main thesis of this article is that some inbuilt factors like the design of the library, the structural and functional organisation as well as the way the library is run on a daily basis are major determinants of library abuse.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Library malpractice is a social problem that seriously pervades the library business. Ratchcliffe (1992) rightly pointed out that it is endemic. Simply put, malpractices, are anti-social acts in the library which can hardly be stamped out completely but which can be reduced to tolerable levels. It is in this view that Lincoln and Lincoln (1986) observed that the library does not exist separately from the community and its problems, so if there is an increase in crime as a result of unemployment or some other social issues, then the library may suffer along with these public and private institutions. Olanlokun (1997) and Berinyuy (2003) both identified ten major crimes committed by students in Africa university libraries namely; mutilation, larceny, robbery, burglary, impersonation, assaults, disobeying library rules and regulations, displacement of material and noise making in the library. Amongst the above mentioned crimes, Akinsfolirin (1992) and line (1969) reported that book theft is the common and most devastating. Olugbuo (2000) supports this view as he notes that the recurrent threat of theft of both library materials and equipment has become a constant source of worry for university librarians. Mowat (1982) carried the explanation even further as he informed that some materials were more vulnerable to stealing than others. Thus the greater the value of a material, the greater the prospect of it being stolen.

Another major group of malpractice is refusal to obey library rules and regulations. Olalire (1997) clarifies that this includes so many aspects such as the duplicating of library ownership stamp, not keeping to users instructions and gaining access into the library in a trickiest way. Minor crimes are equally committed in the library. According to Morrow (1993) they included displacement of books from shelves, eating and drinking and noise making.

So many reasons have been reported to account for book pilfering. Broad Head(1973) alluded this misdeed to the pressure of academic studies on the reader. This reason is not likely to be universal because unlike broad head, Olanlokun (1997) found out that stealing became acute with the high cost of books and other library materials. This is accentuated by the general poverty which the structural adjustment programme foisted on almost all Africans.

Apart from the cost of the materials, Bean (1992) established an interesting correlation between the type of charging system and the decision to mutilate and or steal. He contended that a sophisticated checking system gives rise to less theft but rather ensures more mutilation. A similar relationship is established by Nwogu and Anunobi (2002) as they asserted that the advent of open or free access to library material gave rise to increase anti-social behaviour towards the resources of the library. Other circumstantial reasons that have been advanced for mutilation, stealing and displacement of library materials include high cost of photocopying in the library, break down of photocopiers, early closing hours, copyright restrictions on making copies of entire document etc.

A summary of the causes of university library malpractices is made by Kayode (1991) who identified the following factors.

Poverty of users

- * Scarcity of needed books in the library
- * Inadequate number of books in the library
- * Paucity of time to spend in the library
- * Distance from the classroom to the library
- * Too many students for a title
- * Fear of others who may borrow the title.

Library malpractice is almost an inherent ill in Library use. This is why Bakewell (1990) insisted that since the Library is user centred, violence is part of the Library security problems so management should take steps to protect staff and users against needless violence. Many approaches both manual and technical have been variously reported for the prevention of Library crimes. It is on this direction that Houl-gale and Cheney (1992) identified two, namely the physical and environmental methods. To him the physical involves

efforts to protect the Library building and its content with the available fences, gates, lightings, patrols walls, doors, windows, window netting and roofs. The environmental prevention on the other hand, deals with the environment in which the criminal operates. They thus focus on the psychology of criminal activities, the mental impulse like excitement, anxiety, impatience, tension and fear. Hinks (1992) and Been (1992) added staff training and motivations and the use of electronic theft detection systems (ETDS) to the plethora of strategies to combat Library users' malpractices.

This review shows that little attention has yet been paid to factors like Library design, structural and functional organisation and the daily functioning of the Library as determining factors of library abuse. That is the main thrust of this investigation.

PROCEDURE/METHODOLOGY

Two Cameroonian university libraries- the university of Yaounde I (YUL) and university of Buea (BUL) were carefully selected, because they possessed contrasting attributes. YUL is a first generation library that practices the french system of librarianship. It operates the indirect access system with no borrowing services and no strict membership. The BUL on the other hand, is a third generation library that practices an Anglo-Saxon system. It operates a direct access system with very active loan service and strict membership conditions. Given the complex nature of the study, two main instruments were used for data collection i.e. observation and interviews. Since the study had to do with crime, both obtrusive and unobtrusive observations were carried out. Two observation guides were designed, one to record the types and frequency of crimes committed by patrons and the second to record information on the structural design, the functional organisation of the two libraries and the day to day activities of the library. Some of the main issues observed were; library compartmentalization, exterior security, check points within the library, access routes, placement of reading space and book shelves, opening and closing hours, borrowing conditions, condition of photocopying services, level of security, library orientation, library guides, rules and regulations and level of training and motivation of the library staff. Unstructured interviews were equally administered to those students who were caught carrying out these anti-social acts. This was aimed at finding

out what pushed them into committing such acts. Semi structured interviews were equally conducted with the heads of the various services to gather justifiable explanations to the issues observed, and insights into unobservable issues. This exercise was administered to ten staff of both libraries. Both the observation guides and interview guides were simultaneously administered by selected and trained staff of both libraries. This exercise lasted three months i.e. June, July and August(library peak period). The collected data was analysed using descriptive and analytic statistical techniques like frequency counts percentages and mean scores.

RESULTS

The findings of this study are presented below using three tables. The first table reports the types of crime committed and their level of occurrence. The second table reports the staff opinion about what pushed their patrons to abuse library services. The third table summarises the reason that were given by students who were caught carrying out this anti-social act.

Table 1 : Types of library malpractices identified and the frequency of commission. Source : Researchers field.

University/Crime	Month			Total	Maen
	June	July	August		
1)Theft					
YUL	10	20	4	34	11,33
BUL	2	0	1	3	1,00
2) Mutilation					
YUL	4	20	6	30	10,00
BUL	00	00	2	2	0,67
3) Impersonation					
YUL	4	2	4	10	3,33
BUL	2	6	3	11	3,67
4) Assault					
YUL	14	45	17		
BUL	00	00	10	76	25,33
5) Eating					
YUL	21	75	10	10	3,33
BUL	6	29	4		
6) Disobedience					
YUL	25	135	8	106	35,33
BUL	3	0	6	49	16,33
7) Drinking					
YUL	16	37	2		
BUL	2	19	1	168	56,00
8) Displacement					
YUL	60	63	10	9	3,00
BUL	00	00	00		
9) Noise Making					
YUL	30	25	5	55	18,33
BUL	4	5	4		

Table one shows that nine types of library malpractices occur in both libraries. However the rate of abuse varies from one library to another and between different periods in the same library; YUL registered more crimes in eight of the nine types of crimes identified. More so, within three months, YUL registered four times (672) as much crimes as BUL (119). Assault (76), theft (34) and mutilation were the major abuses on library materials in YUL. Curiously these same crimes were almost non existent in BUL - Assault (10), theft(3) and mutilation (2). Unlike in YUL were it was found out that the displacement of library materials was the second highest crime (133 cases registered in three month), non of such cases (0) were recorded in BUL within this same period. The type of malpractice that registered the highest disparity between the two libraries was the disrespect of library rules and regulation (163 cases for YUL against just 9 for BUL). This coincidentally was the most visible type of abuse. The least disparity was noticed on the rate of impersonation. It was found to be the only delinquent act in which BUL recorded more cases (11) than YUL (10). The month of July registered the highest number of abuses In both libraries (examination period).

During interview sessions with the ten staff of each library, they were asked to give their opinion on which factors accounted for their patrons malpractices. The results are presented in table two below.

Table 2: staff reasons for students malpractices

Reason/Causes	YUL	BUL
No comprehensive library education program	7	3
Non-adapted library building	8	0
Close access to library materials	10	0
No lending facilities	10	0
Lose security at entrance	8	2
Liberal rules and regulations	7	2
Absence of library staff at reading areas	6	4
Unapt library hours	5	3
Inadequate penalties - punishment	6	1

Source: Field work

As shown in the table above, much disparities were recorded. While all the staff (10) interviewed in YUL accepted that close access to library materials and the absence of a loan service were the main causes of library abuse, non of the staff of BUL identified to any of the two reasons.

More so while all the eight reasons identified, registered at least 50 % (5 staff) in YUL, non of them got above 40 % (4 staff) in BUL. The reasons advanced in table two above, were found to be consisted with those in table one.

Each time a student was caught in the act of library malpractice, he/she was give the reasons that pushed them into committing the act. Their opinions are presented in table 3 below.

Table 3: Students reasons for malpractice

Reason/Causes	YUL	BUL
1) No leading service	30	5
2) No direct access	28	3
3) Not aware of penalties	100	0
4) Not aware of rules and regulations	90	0
5) No library orientation	120	6
6) Ease of going out with the material	20	0
7) Academic pressure	10	10
8) High cost of photocopiers-absence	8	10
9) High cost of materials	10	15
10)Inadequate copies	5	5

Source: Field work

The first six of the ten reasons that were mostly stated by YUL students, paradoxically were least popular amongst BUL students. Rather, the four last causes that registered high responses amongst BUL students were user-centred. On the on the contrary, such reasons were reported not to be the major reasons why YUL students committed anti-social acts in their library.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study have clearly demonstrated the fact that the two libraries both experience major and minor library malpractices. However, the level of crime varies significantly from one library to the other and between the two libraries.

Again, the level of malpractices in the university of Yaounde one library is alarmingly high (672 in three month) and is an obvious cause for concern. Even more important are the reasons that account for these malpractices. Here again the reasons differed greatly between the two libraries.

On a more specific note, theft of library materials was observed in both libraries. However the high theft rate (34 cases in three months) in YUL is said to be largely encouraged by the bad practices of not borrowing out library materials and worst still the indirect access system being practiced. Thus all the ten librarians interviewed acknowledged this. More so, thirty of the thirty four students caught stealing refer to this as being the reason that pushed them into this act. On the other hand, the two cases registered in BUL rather alluded their acts to academic pressure and the high cost of the materials stolen. In fact, the YUL librarian confirmed that eight thousand volumes had disappeared in the past ten years. This was likely because most theft cases are hardly caught.

Mutilation is about the second most grievous library malpractice. Its prevalence was reported in both libraries. Most of these acts are carried out during the examination periods. Meanwhile, the harsh punishment that awaits the deviant as well as the tight security at exit points was said to be the factors that deter most users from indulging in this act in BUL. Contrarily, delinquent users in YUL confessed that security emphasis was laid on books and not papers. So since files were allowed into the library, it was easy to mutilate materials, put them into files and walk out. The mutilation in YUL was accounted for by inappropriate library hours, loose security and the absence of library staff in reading areas. On the other hand, the minimal prevalence (2 in three months) of the crime in BUL is accounted for by the tight security at exit, intense library orientation and education given to both fresh and old students, and the severe punishment that awaits users that are caught in such acts.

Disobeying library rules and regulations is another major crime in the library. This is the most committed crime in YUL (186) as against just nine for BUL. This implies that there is total lawlessness in YUL. This situation in YUL is largely accounted for by the absences of library orientation sessions, the liberal rules and regulations which are not very known to users and the mild sanctions that are emitted on those who break the rules. A close observation also revealed the Laissez-faire attitude of most library staff who claim not to be motivated towards arresting this abuse. On the contrary BUL registered only nine of such acts in three months. Our study revealed that compulsory library orientation sessions are organised at the

start of every season during which students are fully sensitised about the importance of the library to the success of the student. In this way a library culture is progressively instilled in the students.

Material displacement is one of the most rampant malpractices in YUL (133 in three months). Interestingly, none of such cases were recorded in BUL within this period. This high prevalence as explained, by both the staff and patrons of YUL was due to the indirect access system that is practiced in this library. More so, there is no loan service in this library. Since reshelving is not a daily practice here, patrons can hide materials for weeks without it being discovered. The BUL library staff explained that the near absence of this crime was ensured by the daily reshelving of materials. More so, highly demanded materials were subjected to special treatment whereby librarians ensure that each user exploits the materials for a maximum of two hours.

Minor cases like eating, drinking and noise making were found to be common in both libraries though BUL registered higher prevalence rates on minor crimes (49 for eating, 22 for drinking and 13 for noise making). Most of these acts were carried out during examination periods. It was revealed that at peak periods, students usually do not have time to eat and so they sneak in with snacks, yoghurts, soft plastic drinks and water into the Library. However, cases of alcoholic drinks were not reported. These high rates were as a result of the fact that many library staff do not consider these practices as serious offences. They therefore become sympathetic and complacent with the students. Noise making was a fallout of sporadic group discussions and conversations among students as they read and prepare for examination. curiously, a majority of the students caught, said they were not aware of the fact that noise making was a crime within library practice.

A close examination of the various malpractices and the reasons that account for such acts are very revealing. Most accusing fingers in YUL point to the structural design of the library- poor access routes, no wire-mesh at the exterior, non functional restaurant, poor lighting etc. secondly the structural and functional organisation of the library also share in this blame. This concern issues like poor compartmentalisation,

poor job description, no loan service, indirect or close access in practice, no library user guides, few check points and lax security. The third class of factors which bordered on the daily functioning of the library included issues such as unapt opening and closing hours, high cost of photocopying, lax security and the "*laissez-faire*" attitude of the library staff.

CONCLUSION

This study has revealed that both libraries encounter similar library malpractices. However their level of occurrence differs widely. Unlike BUL where the prevalence is relatively minimal, that of YUL is alarmingly high. The reasons for this variation lies more on the designs of the library buildings, the internal structural and functional organisation of the two libraries, and how there are run on a daily bases, rather than on user related factors like pressure to succeed academically, high cost of materials and the inability of poor students to acquire them, the selfish and nonchalant attitude of students and the open access to the materials as most previous studies have reported. This study has revealed that operating a close access system and refusing to loan out materials to patrons are catalysts rather than deterrents to library malpractices. This especially as it is established that crime is inevitable in libraries.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Given the seriousness of these malpractices and their deleterious effects on university library services, it is imperative that statistics of these crimes be taken so that effective management decisions can be made towards their prevention.
- 2) The structure of the university of Yaounde one library should be seriously renovated, the library should be wire-meshed all round and all floors safeguarded.
- 3) After this, the library should reopen its loan service and revert to direct access for the core collection. This will largely reduce both the level of theft and that of mutilation.
- 4) The opening and closing hours of both libraries should be extended. Libraries could be open from 8 am to 11 pm. This will give patrons enough time to use the materials correctly and

would reduce the level of mutilation and displacement of materials.

5) Priority should be given to staff training both internally and externally in the two libraries. Emphasis in such exercises should be on what staff should expect from the patrons and how to handle them. This would work better if the staff are motivated.

6) Sound user education and orientation should be instituted in both libraries. Both libraries should also produce comprehensive library guides which should be distributed to all patrons .

7) Stringent rules and regulations should be made, vulgarised and implemented especially in YUL. This will scare patrons from committing these acts. This should go with tighter security both at entry and at exit.

8) Rapid photocopying services should be established in both libraries. The cost could be subsidized to affordable rates. This will seriously curb theft and mutilation.

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