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Keshav Ramesh Dhuri Dr

Sant Sohirobanath Ambiyee Govt. College of Arts & Commerce, Pernem Goa (India),
dhuri.keshav@gmail.com

Jovita Lobo Ms

St. Xavier's High School, Moira Bardez Goa (India), jovita0056@gmail.com

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Investigating the Detrimental Outcomes of Malicious Activities in the Academic College Libraries

Dr. Keshav Ramesh Dhuri

Librarian,

Sant Sohrobanath Ambiyee Govt. College of Arts & Commerce, Pernem Goa (India)

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2013-6090>

dhuri.keshav@gmail.com

Ms. Jovita Lobo

Librarian

St. Xavier's High School, Moira Bardez Goa (India)

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8768-1475>

jovita0056@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Academic libraries play a key role in encouraging literacy and cultural interest in students, staff and the community. In the present-day world, theft and vandalism has become very common and a severe problem in academic college libraries. This research paper mainly deals with work of the library professionals in investigating the book theft, vandalism, mutilation activities, and planning polices to control these malicious activities. A structured online questionnaire was prepared for the college librarians to the gather data for the research study. The research data was collected from forty library professionals. Insufficient copies of text books are the main cause for vandalism agreed upon by the majority 85% of the respondents. 80% of the library professionals mentioned to have CCTV installation which can reduce malpractices in the libraries As per the research study 100% of respondents agree that by conducting orientation program, checking the requirements of the patrons, providing the necessary resources required by them, by using wire mesh for windows and having a single way for entry and exit will help in combating vandalistic activities in the academic libraries. This study will also help the library professionals as well as the patrons to preserve and guard invaluable academic wealth of libraries for potential generations.

KEYWORDS: Malicious Activities, Library Policy, Vandalism, Book Theft, Mutilation, Illegal, Unethical, Academic College Libraries, India

INTRODUCTION

Academic library is considered as the 'heart' of the learning community. It is a crucial component of an academic institution which aids in providing quality education. Libraries play a key role in encouraging literacy and cultural interests among students, staff and the community as a whole. A library is a fountainhead of information and knowledge. It is a place where the experience and expertise of the past can meet the needs of the present. It empowers the students and faculty to learn, to conduct a research study and advance their horizons of knowledge by providing a variety of resources in physical as well as in electronic form. Fulfilling the demands and satisfying the information needs of the library patrons is an important obligation of the library.

Library has undergone a significant change with the changing time, civilization and culture. In today's world, information resources are going on multiplying which is followed by the demands of the library patrons. Fulfilling the demand of each and every user is becoming difficult due to various vandalistic activities which affects the delivery of services and creates dissatisfaction among the library clientele. Users are increasing as well a numerous malicious activities are also noticed in the library which poses detrimental effects on the library resources. Malicious activities by the vandals pose a great threat to the library property and the precious library resources thereby degrading the beauty of the library. Embracing the various strategies for safe guarding the library from the treacherous hands of the vandals is of utmost importance.

THEFT AND MUTILATION IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

The librarian, the library and the users of the library suffer the effects of theft and mutilation. Theft in academic libraries can be in different forms. Intentional destruction of materials by way of writing, scribbling on the content of the book, theft of library books or other material, causing damage to the book, ripping off pages of books and documents, arson, loss of books, non return of books, misuse of reading material, deliberate defacement of materials, unauthorized borrowing, drawing, scratching, writing on library furniture and cause breakage mostly to tables, chairs, computers, and other equipment, damage to library building and other property of the library due to some reasons. Illegal incidences inside and outside the library constitute vandalism.

SECURITY ISSUES IN LIBRARIES

There are different kinds of students visiting libraries, some students take care of library books while some don't. When books are out of the library, books that are borrowed are mishandled, sometimes lost or unknowingly damaged. Security issues are the most trending problems occurring in the academic libraries. Most commonly done crimes are book theft, mutilation, misplacement, vandalism, tearing of pages etc. These issues can be seen since long, it is not only the case of present era. A security issue is the case in all the libraries of the world. Some other security issues includes natural calamities, library security buildings etc. Theft of books from the libraries is a foremost problem worldwide. In simple words, theft of book means carrying books out of library from the library without permission and it is against the rule. Either books are kept for longer duration or they are not returned back to the library. Mutilation of books involves issues like purposely tearing of pages, ripping, marking etc. Library books are made unfit for further reading or use. It is leading problem in most of the college libraries. Such crimes are found undetectable. Most targeted materials are the periodicals. Misplacement of books means placing the books other den its original place. Students places or hide books at unexpected places. Misplacement of books usually happens when there are lesser number of copies in proportion to available students. Mutilation is the act of damaging library holdings. Mutilation mainly constitutes scratching, engraving, drawing cartoons on library materials. It spoils the appearance of library. Mutilation is much frustrating and it is one of the serious problems faced by the library professional.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pathak and Vyas (2020) in their research paper titled "Theft and Mutilation of Library Resources in University Libraries of India: A Study" made a broad investigation on the libraries of universities in Gujarat state of India. The research paper mentioned the work of library professionals in checking book robbery, vandalism, mutilation, and planning strategy to control and beat the issue in scholastic libraries. This examination additionally explores the security challenges in the libraries of universities. The research expects to distinguish the causes of book theft, mutilation and vandalism and the weakness of library arrangements and safety efforts.

Chinwendu, A (2019) in his research study on the Academic Library at the University of Lagos in Nigeria mentioned that mutilation and theft are the major outcomes of the very costly books, lack of photocopying machine, security system and unavailability of

E-Resources in the respective libraries. The libraries have a collection of printed materials which includes books, papers periodicals, reports, unique assortment of government archives and a wide scope of electronic assets among others with which their clients' data needs are met.

Idakwo (2019) through his research study titled "Theft and Mutilation on the Use of Library Resources in Nigerian Academic Libraries" Discussed about the causes of theft and mutilation. The high cost of books, lack of photocopying machine, lack of electronic security measures, and lack of proper monitoring of students, porous library security system, and unavailability of online databases among others were some of the factors highlighted in the paper. This study also revealed that theft and mutilation of information resources has lots of negative impact on the entire collection and services. To curb the malpractices, he suggested that CCTV system to be deployed and strategic positioning of the security officer in the library is important so that strict compliance to the library rules and regulations would be ensured among the library users.

Urhiewhu and others (2018) have highlighted the security measures adopted in academic libraries against thefts of library resources in Nigeria. All the academic libraries stamps specific pages, security personnel and porters are placed at the entrance door of the libraries to check in and check 4 out users of the library. It was learnt that only Federal University of Science and Technology Library, Akure adopted CCTV method.

Olajide (2017) in his study mentioned that theft is when an individual dishonestly appropriates the property belonging to another. The author has further stated that security is a major concern and he says that libraries are systems and security is an energetic part of maintaining stability in the system. It aids acceptable strategies of librarians and other library professionals to avoid or ameliorate the negative penalties of a realized risk in libraries. Therefore, security management of library is a professional effort to deal with difficult problems of library safety and security. Distinctive of library security outfit is to reduce damages and defend library patrons and their belongings as well as library resources, computers and other systems.

Jagadish and Sarasvathy (2016) reviewed the response of the librarians towards theft, mutilation and misplacement of library resources in university libraries in Karnataka. The study found that more than seventy percent of the librarians have felt that illegal incidences at

the university libraries such as theft, mutilation and misplacement of library materials has turned out to be serious issue and has negatively impacted the academic spirit of the library.

Ozowa, Aba, & Aba (2016). Investigated the impact of electronic surveillance systems on book theft and mutilation in Francis Suleimanu Idachaba Library, University of Agriculture, Makurdi. In this research study, electronic surveillance is the use of modern technological security devices to detect mutilation and book theft. Descriptive survey design was used as design of the research study. The population of the research study was 300 library users drawn from the nine colleges in University of Agriculture, Makurdi. Sample size for this study was made up of entire population.

Gautam, V., Behera, P. K., & Singh, M. (2011) outlined the significance of having digital collections in every library and said that it has become a main source of information and a preferred mode of building library collection in a library. The research study mentions that there are various risks of unauthorized use of electronic material and that it is not safe and secure by its nature. The paper tells that the more the effort is made to create digital contents the less attention is given to its security, and threats come in many forms. The study concentrates on the importance of digital data security and also security of library collection

Maidabino (2011) has suggested the requirement for staff and patron awareness is very vital for security of the collection in the library. Staff members and users of the library should have enough knowledge of the significance of securing library resources. The lack of knowledge may result in a purposeful or unintentional breach of collection security.

Ogunyade (2005) under his study he found that theft and mutilation of books is a serious problem which affects student's educational development. As some student said that it is not easy finding the books needed for their assignments, it gets frustrating when they are not on the shelves. According to his opinion he thinks that this problem is costly and disruptive to the library and its users. Therefore it is necessary that library administration should put in place measures in combating theft and mutilation in the library material.

Martin, A. L. (2000) has studied on archival security and mentions that archivist protect and provide access to various archival documents, this study also states that the archivist prime goal is to safeguard the archival materials safely in custody and its integrity is well kept. The study has suggested that documentation as another vital preventive measure in terms of users. Further this study also highlights on incunabulum documents and different aspects on

security knowledge in the 1980s as important archival materials which needs to be safeguard as archives.

SCOPE AND NEED OF THE STUDY

The study aims to understand and emphasize the causes and effects of theft and other vandalistic activities that happen in the library and recommend ways to avert it. The study is based on 40 academic college libraries. It will definitely help the librarians as well as the patrons to preserve and guard invaluable academic wealth of libraries for potential generations.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The research aims to study Human/Man-made security systems in the academic college libraries and identify the current status of the libraries in terms of security.

- To determine different factors causing theft and vandalism in academic libraries
- To find out the alertness of the librarians and their capability in dealing with the problems faced.
- To determine the impact of electronic security systems on theft of library resources in academic libraries.
- To recommend various methods to prevent theft and mutilation in academic libraries.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A structured online questionnaire prepared using Google Forms was used to collect the data from the library professionals working in academic college libraries. The online questionnaire was sent to 50 librarians in the month of April 2021. Altogether 40 responses were recorded from the college librarians who actively participated in contributing the required data for the study. The data collected has been analyzed and presented using frequency tables and percentages.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Data analysis is carried out in accordance with objective of study. Analysis is done to find out causes, effects and strategies for prevention of theft, mutilation, misplacing, and vandalism in the academic college libraries. It also sets out reasons for stealing of books, tearing pages, misplacing books etc.

Table No. 1: STRENGTH OF STUDENTS

Strength of Students	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Below 500	6	15
500 to 1000	18	45
1000 to 1500	6	15
Above 1500	10	25

Table No 1 depicts the total strength of students in the respective colleges under study. Out of the forty colleges, majority i.e. 18 colleges (45%) strength belongs to category about 500 to 1000 students. On the other hand the strength of 10 colleges (25%) is above 1500. 15% response was recorded for both the classes below 500 and 1000 to 1500.

Table No. 2: LIBRARY BOOKS / COLLECTION

Total Collection	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Below 10000	5	12.5
10000 to 20000	9	22.5
20000 to 30000	10	25
30000 to 40000	7	17.5
Above 40000	9	22.5

The table 2 shows total collection of books of in the college libraries. Out of forty colleges, majority i.e. ten college libraries (25%) have collection of books which ranges between 20000 to 30000. On the other hand, nine colleges (22.5%) have collection ranging from 10000 to 20000 and above 40000 respectively. The least number of colleges (12.5%) has collection of books which is less than 10000.

Table 3: TYPE OF ACCESS SYSTEM FOLLOWED IN THE LIBRARY

Type of Access	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Open Access System	36	90
Close Access System	4	10

Table 3 mentioned that the open access facility in the library may cause more library crimes and mutilation than close access facility, an attempt was made to find out whether the librarians are providing open or close access to the patrons for retrieval. The table reveals the type of access system followed in the library. Majority of the college libraries (90%) follow open access system for the benefit of their patrons. However, 4 colleges (10%) follow close access system of retrieval. In close access system it was noticed that there are less chances of theft and vandalism as the users cannot access the library collection.

Table No. 4: TYPE OF LIBRARY RESOURCES THAT ARE FOUND LOST

Library Resources	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Text Books	40	100
Journals	6	15
Magazines	3	7.5
Reference Books	25	62.5
E-resources(CD's, DVD's)	4	10

Table No 4 indicates the type of library resources that are found lost during stock verification. It is inferred from the study that 100% of the respondents say that text books are the most targeted materials by the vandals. Books were found lost, misplaced or stolen due to less number of copies. Whereas 62.5% of the respondents say that reference books were found missing. The main reason for reference books going missing is because they are expensive and therefore not issued to the library patrons. Only 15% of the library professionals mentioned that journals were found lost from the library. 10% respondents said that CD's and DVD's were also lost and a few were found destroyed by the vandals. Magazines were the least effected, only 7.5% respondents said that magazines were found lost as they are not issued to the users.

Table No 5: VANDALISM PRACTICES NOTICED IN THE LIBRARY

Vandalism Practices	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Theft of library materials	36	90
Mutilation/tearing out of pages	31	77.5
Scribbling on the pages	27	67.5
Misplacement	21	52.5
Non-return of books	19	47.5
Destroying library furniture	5	12.5

Table No. 5 represents the various kinds of vandalistic practices noticed in the college libraries. From the investigation it was ascertained that majority i.e. 90% of the respondents face the issue of theft of library materials. Mutilation or tearing-off of pages from the books was noticed among 77.5% of the respondents. 67.5% respondents found scribbling on the pages of the books. 52.5% of the respondents said that books were found misplaced, hidden in other shelves of the library. This deprives the sincere users to avail the book and it also becomes difficult for the library staff to locate the book the patron requires. The least malpractice noticed by 12.5% of the respondents was destruction of library furniture by the vandals.

Table No. 6: FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR VANDALISM

Factors Responsible	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Insufficient copies of materials	34	85
Absence of photocopy facility	11	27.5
High cost of Xeroxing	5	12.5
Lack of library staff	28	70
Lack of vigilance of library staff	23	57.5
Patrons selfish behavior	27	67.5
Denial of access to materials	9	22.5

Urge to steal or destroy library materials	6	15
Insufficient loan privileges	31	77.5
Cut-throat competition among students	23	57.5
Lack of user orientation	21	52.5
Unaffordable buying cost of books due to poverty	17	42.5

Table No. 6 depicts the major factors responsible that urge the vandals to indulge in various malpractices that cause harm to the library and its resources. Insufficient copies of materials are the main cause for vandalism agreed upon by the majority 85% of the respondents. 77.5% of the respondents say that insufficient loan privileges are the reason. 67.5% respondents said that selfish behavior of the patrons force them to destroy the resources and 57.5% respondents say that cut-throat competition among the students is another cause for malicious acts.

Table No. 7: LIBRARY EQUIPPED WITH SECURITY SYSTEM AT THE ENTRANCE/EXIT

Security System at Entrance/Exit	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	14	35
No	26	65

Table No. 7 indicates whether the library is equipped with a security system at the entrance/exit of the library. Majority of the respondents i.e. 65% said that they do not have security on the entry/exit of the library. Having a security system (security guard) enables to check-in and check-out the clientele entering and exiting the library. This will also help in maintaining the record and keep a thorough check on the person entering and exiting the library.

TABLE NO. 8: ELECTRONIC SECURITY MEASURES ARE USED IN THE LIBRARY

Electronic Security Measures	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Closed circuit television (CCTV)	22	55
Electronic Gates	1	2.5
Electromagnetic tapes Security Stripes	1	2.5
RFID	1	2.5
Alarms on exit doors	1	2.5
None of these	14	35

Table No. 8 shows the type of electronic security system used in the libraries. As seen in the above table 22 colleges (55%) have installed the monitors, CCTV cameras inside the library whereas electronic gates, electromagnetic tapes security stripes, RFID technology and alarms on the exit doors have received 2.5% response. It was noticed that 14 college libraries (35%) do not have any of the electronic security system in the library. Since library is a growing organism library resources are added up every now and then. Staff finds it very difficult to manage the library and the resources present. Installing Electronic security system is the best way to prevent the issues.

Table No. 9: EFFECTS OF VANDALISM

Detrimental Outcomes	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Reduces Library stock	40	100
Reduces lifespan of materials	18	45
Affects quality of research	19	47.5
Affect delivery of library services	40	100
Non availability of required materials	40	100
Affects interest of patrons	23	57.5
Adds burden to library budget	30	75
Damages image of the library	17	42.5
Leads to frustration among clientele and staff	22	55

Table No. 9 discusses the harmful effects of the various malicious practices on the library. It is learnt that 100% of the respondents say that it reduces library stock, affects delivery of library services and it possess hardships for the patrons as the required materials are not available. 75% of the respondents say that it adds burden to the library budget. 57.5% of the respondents agree that it affects the interest of the patrons and demoralize them from coming to the library. Combating all these malicious acts is very important to save the interest of the library clientele and also prevent the precious library resources from getting lost and destroyed.

Table No. 10: STRATEGIES TO PREVENT VANDALISM

Strategies	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Providing more textbook for borrowing/issuing	35	87.5
Providing reprographic facility	29	72.5
Providing more reference copies	30	75
Compulsory student & staff ID to enter library	37	92.5
Introduce firewalls & intrusion detection system to stop unauthorised users to access e- resources	31	77.5
Increasing library hours	5	12.5
Conduct orientation program	40	100
Increase in the number of library staff	29	72.5
Checking the requirements of patrons	40	100
Use of wire mesh for windows	40	100
Surveillance should be installed in the library	32	80
Single way for entry and exit	40	100

Table No. 10 indicates the various strategies that can be adopted to prevent malicious practices in the library. Libraries need to have safety and security plans in order to protect the precious collection of resources. As seen in the above table, all (100%) respondents agree that conducting orientation program, checking the requirements of the patrons will aid in providing the necessary resources required by them, using wire mesh for windows and having a single way for entry and exit will help in combating vandalistic activities. 92.5% respondents said that compulsory student & staff ID has to be checked while entering so that unauthorized party does not enter the library. 87.5% respondents say that providing more number of textbooks for borrowing/issuing will prevent the books from getting lost, misplaced or stolen. 80% of the library professionals mentioned to have CCTV installation in can reduce malpractices in their libraries. . It is of vital importance that the libraries adopt the necessary strategies to prevent the malicious activities which destroy the valuable resources and the beauty of the library.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- There should be written policies for accessing library materials and protection of library resources. This will help the library staff to give instructions for inappropriate behaviour.
- A wired mesh should be used for library windows so that users don't perform practices such as throwing out books through windows.
- Library building should be designed such a way that there is single point of entry and exit.
- The librarian must be aware of the requirements of the library patrons and keep sufficient materials in the library which are in great demand.
- Appointing adequate number of trained staff for monitoring and smooth functioning of the library activities.
- Library should employ well-trained security guards at the entrance/exit to keep a watch and for thorough search at the exit.
- Stock verification and rectification in Libraries should be made mandatory at least once in three years.
- Library orientation and the awareness programs for all the clientele especially for the newly admitted students is a must.
- Provision for photocopying service in libraries will enable the users to make quick photocopies of required resources at reasonable rate.

- Introduce firewalls and intrusion detection systems to stop unauthorized users to access electronic resources.
- All the libraries should deploy new technology electronic security systems such as CCTV cameras and if possible RFID technology.

CONCLUSION

A library is a very important part of an academic institution which aids in providing quality education. There are various factors such as insufficient copies of materials, lack of library staff, selfish behavior of users etc. that can cause vandalism in the library. It poses adverse effects on academic college libraries as well as the patrons. It is very important to develop strategies, plans and policies to control this kind of malpractice. The study recommends that library building should be designed in such a way that there is single point of entry and exit. There should be written policies for accessing library materials and protection of library resources. This helps the library staff to give instructions for inappropriate behaviour.

The investigation found that there is theft of library materials, unauthorized borrowing and mutilation or tearing of pages, issued books were not returned in time by patrons. It was also revealed that outcomes of vandalism results in reduction in library stock, affects quality of research and poor library service delivery. From the investigation it is recommended that to circumvent vandalism, the libraries should provide more copies of required textbooks, increase in library staff, equip and install latest technologies such as CCTV and RFID technology and also ensure that the patrons are fined if they are found offending the library rules and regulations. This study will help library professionals make their library safer and more secure.

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