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**MUTILATION OF INFORMATION RESOURCES IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN  
ABUJA, NIGERIA: THE WAY FORWARD**

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**Abstract**

The study investigates the mutilation of information resources in University libraries in Abuja. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprises 244 library staff made up of professionals and non-professionals in Universities in Abuja. Because the population was small and manageable, all the 244 library staff were used for the study. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled “Mutilation of Information Resources Questionnaire” (MIQ). The questionnaire was validated by experts. The reliability of the questionnaire was established using Cronbach Alpha method and a reliability coefficient of 0.81 was obtained. Data were collected and analyzed using Frequency, Percentages, Means and Standard Deviations. Findings of the study revealed that, journals, textbooks, magazines, newspapers, projects/theses/dissertations, government publications, term papers, compact discs, CD-ROMs and audio-visual materials were the information resources affected by mutilation. It was also revealed that the forms of mutilation of library resources include, tearing of pages of books/journals, underlining of texts/journal, highlighting pages of textbooks/journals, bending spines of textbooks and journals, using of wet hands to turn pages of books/journals, cracking of CDs, marking of books/journals with biros, shading of books/journals with pencils, ear-dogging pages of books/journals and making comments on pages of books/journals. Further, it was revealed that the causes of mutilation of library resources in universities in Abuja include, poverty/financial constraints among users, high cost of photocopying library resources, insufficient library opening hours, ignorance of impact on the users, inadequate loan period, low quality of library services, frustration with library services on the part of users, lack of power supply, high cost of books, lack of security men at the reading section and inadequate close circuit cameras in the library. The study concludes that, plethora of information resources in university libraries in Abuja are prone to mutilation. Recommendation were made that, the cost of photocopying information materials in the libraries should be subsidized by Universities to enable easy access to information materials by library users as this can help in curbing the issue of mutilation; mutilators should be subjected to heavy and well defined penalties such as withdrawal of library card to serve as deterrent to other users and libraries should adopt the use of new technologies such as Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) to solve some of the problems caused by mutilation of library resources among others.

***Keywords:* University Library, Mutilation and Information Resources**

## **Introduction**

University libraries provide information resources in both print and non-print formats to its users. The libraries are seen as the heart of university systems and its basic purpose is to provide the university staff, students and researchers with materials assistance and an enabling environment that would facilitate teaching, learning, research and advance the frontiers of knowledge. The responsibility of the university library is to ensure that the use of its information resources and services are maximized to meet the users' information needs, hence the need for library user education program.

The ability of the library to meet the needs of its teeming users is greatly dependent on the availability of information resources (Idakwo, 2019). In university libraries, information resources mutilation is a common problem that deserves serious attention from librarians and other stakeholders in general. Mutilation entails defacement or damage of library materials/collection. It involves removal of book pages, articles from periodicals, of illustrations and, or the whole text book from monographs. To Amidu and Umaru (2019), mutilation is the means of cutting off or permanently destroying a book or an essential part of a book or material. It is wrong to mutilate library materials thereby denying others the opportunity of using such materials. Mutilation is carried out by lazy, uncultured users for their selfish interest. Mutilation in academic libraries becomes rampant towards the end of the semester when students are preparing for examinations. In most cases, mutilated materials become more or less useless as some chapters or parts of some materials or texts are removed.

The practice is becoming a serious, disheartening and unfortunate fact of library life. Lorenzen (2014) reported high incidence of book and periodical mutilation in some academic libraries studied. The researcher indicated that, collection mutilation takes many forms, ranging from

underlining and highlighting in library books, tearing and or removing some pages of the books and tempering with the editorial comment in the library books. Abareh (2011) affirms that mutilation of library materials is a common phenomenon in university libraries. The author identifies different forms of mutilation to include misuse of library collections such as bending the spine of a book to ensure that it stays open at the right page, using wet fingers to turn book pages, marking or shading book pages with pencil, or biro, tearing book pages, and damage to the book spine. Several reasons were responsible for the cause of mutilation of library collections. Ratcliffe (2010) insists that necessity rather than criminal drive is responsible for students' mutilation of books.

As the custodian of library information resources, librarians own an obligation to their patrons and users to preserve the library stocks for present and future use. A depletion of available information resources means a reduction in how they can serve and satisfy the needs of patrons (Idakwo, 2019). Besides, non-availability of library materials might mean inefficiency on the part of the librarians and other information experts who keep such materials. It is therefore in the interest of the professionals and their patrons to preserve available materials and resources from mutilation.

Librarians over the years have been bothered about ensuring the protection of material resources from this menace. This is because all types of libraries are affected by this unwholesome act. Mutilation has become a canker worm which has eaten deep into the university library system without distinction. This could be as a result of the popularity of university libraries as opposed to other kinds of libraries due to their use by students for their learning and research purposes.

As observed by the researcher, mutilation is among the most frustrating and serious problems faced by librarians in university libraries in Abuja. It seems that mutilation in the universities is

dramatically increasing despite efforts to help curb it. This growing but concealed problem of mutilation that takes place in these libraries may adversely affect the quality of information resources provided. To contribute to the existing knowledge of mutilation in academic libraries, this study sought to investigate the mutilation of information resources in university libraries in Abuja.

The issue of mutilation of library information resources has been extensively researched by Library and Information Science scholars. Idris, Hassan and Abdul-Qadir (2013) conducted a study on theft and mutilation of library materials in academic libraries and reported that books, newspapers, dictionaries, encyclopedias, journals and magazines were the types of information resources affected by theft and mutilation. Olajide (2017) investigated theft and mutilation challenges and management in academic libraries and reported that books, encyclopedia, dictionary, journals, newspapers, magazines, CD-ROMs and online databases are the information resources affected by theft and mutilation. It was also found that tearing of pages of books is a form of mutilation and that the university library materials are stolen and mutilated due to inadequate copies of library materials and porous security systems. The study further found that Olajide (2017) the use of security personnel at the main entrance, installation of Close Circuit Television (CCTV), installation of electric security system, checking in and out of the library users and personnel, making enough copies of books, window burglary with net, and availability of functional photocopy machine are ways of minimizing theft and mutilation in the library. Fasea and Adedokun (2016) investigated abuse of information materials in academic libraries by students of tertiary institutions and reported that information materials mostly affected by theft and mutilation are textbooks, projects/theses/dissertations and newspapers. Further, Anyaobi and Akpoma (2012) conducted a study on the abuse of Library Materials in Academic Libraries in Delta State

Polytechnic library, Ogwashi-Uku, Nigeria and reported that writing in books is a form of mutilation of library resources among students. Similarly, the finding corroborates with that of Olajide (2017) who reported tearing of pages of books as a form of mutilation. Fasae and Adedokun (2016) examined the abuse of information materials in Academic Libraries by students of tertiary institutions in Ekiti- State, Nigeria and reported the forms of mutilation to include folding of pages of books, and writing on pages of information materials. It was found that students abuse information materials because they are too lazy, selfish. Further, Fasea and Adedokun (2016) reported that mounting of cameras (CCTV) in the library, provision of effective photocopying facilities, proper checking of users when leaving the library and regular acquisition of relevant and current information materials are the ways of minimizing theft and mutilation of information materials. Bello (2001) reported that, security lapses and poor supervision by the library staff contributed highest as a causative factor for library malpractice followed by inadequate number of books in the library. Similarly, Oyesiku, Buraimo and Olusanya (2012) reported the causes of mutilation to include lack of photocopier, ignorance and financial constraint. From the review of extant literature, it can be observed that the issue of mutilation of library resources has remained unabated even though a lot of effort and resources have been expended by librarians and information centre managers to stop this unwholesome act. University libraries have lost most of their valuable resources through this act and continuous loss of information resources is not good for any library.

### **Theoretical Analysis**

This work is hinged on Routine Activity Theory propounded by Marcus Felson and Lawrence Cohen in 1980. Routine Activity Theory focused on situation of crime. This theory stipulates three necessary conditions for crime which include a likely offender, a suitable target

and the absence of a capable guardian coming together in time and space. This signifies that, for a crime to occur, a likely offender must find a suitable target with a capable guardian absence. The likely offender is also referred to as motivated offender. These are individuals who are not only capable of committing criminal activities, but are willing to do so. The theory defined suitable target as a person or object that are seen by offenders as vulnerable or attractive.

The likely or motivated offender as defined by the theory implies that, mutilation of information resources in university libraries is well planned and coordinated by the library users. Suitable target as explained by the theory implies that library users may have a specific information resource that they may want to mutilate. Absence of a capable guardian implies the absence of security systems such as library staff, security guards, close circuit television (CCTV) cameras to mention but a few to check the activities of library users so as to prevent acts that may amount to mutilation of information resources in the library.

### **Objectives of the study**

Specifically, the study sought to achieve the following objectives

- i. Identify the types of information resources affected by mutilation in university libraries in Abuja
- ii. Find out the forms of mutilation of library resources in the libraries under study
- iii. Find out the causes of mutilation of library resources in the concerned libraries.
- iv. Ascertain the ways of curbing the mutilation of library resources in the libraries under study

### **Research Questions**

The study answered the following research questions

- i. What are the types of information resources affected by mutilation in university libraries in Abuja?

- ii. What are the forms of mutilation of information resources in the libraries under study?
- iii. What are the causes of mutilation of information resources in the concerned libraries?
- iv. What are the ways of curbing the mutilation of library resources in the libraries under study?

**Methodology**

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprises 244 library staff made up of professional and non-professional librarians in Universities in Abuja. These universities are: University of Abuja, Veritas University and Nile University. Because the population was small and manageable by the researcher, all the 244 library staff were used for the study. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled “Mutilation of Information Resources Questionnaire” (MIQ). The questionnaire was validated by experts in Library and information Science and Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability of the questionnaire was established using Cronbach Alpha method and a reliability coefficient of 0.81 was obtained. Data were collected and analyzed using Frequency Counts, Percentages, Means and Standard Deviation to answer the research questions. A benchmark of 2.50 was used for decision. Item with a Mean value of 2.50 and above was agreed while those below 2.50 were disagreed

**Results**

**Research Question 1:** What are the types of information resources affected by mutilation in university libraries in Abuja?

**Table 1: Frequency Counts and Percentages of the Types of Information Resources Affected by Mutilation in University Libraries in Abuja**

SN	ITEM	FREQUENCY		PERCENTAGE (%)		DECISION
		AFT	NAFT	AFT	NAFT	

1	Journals	214	30	87.7	12.3	Affected
2	Textbooks	244	0	100	0.0	Affected
3	Magazines	180	64	73.8	26.2	Affected
4	Newspapers	199	45	81.6	18.4	Affected
5	Projects/theses/dissertations	210	34	86.1	13.9	Affected
6	Government publications	171	73	70.1	29.9	Affected
7	Term papers	177	67	72.5	27.5	Affected
8	Compact Disks	140	104	57.4	42.6	Affected
9	CD-ROMs	140	104	57.4	42.4	Affected
10	Audio-Visual Materials	158	86	64.8	35.2	Affected

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**AFT= Affected, NAFT= Not Affected**

Table 1 shows the types of information resources affected by mutilation in university libraries in Abuja State in Frequencies and Percentages. From the table, all the items (item 1, item2, item3, item4, item5, item6, item7, item8, item9 and item10) have percentages affected above 50%. This indicate that the information resources affected by mutilation in university libraries in Abuja are journals, textbooks, magazines, newspapers, projects/theses/dissertations, government publications, term papers, compact discs, CD-ROMs and audio-visual materials.

**Research Question 2:** What are the forms of mutilation of information resources in University libraries in Abuja?

**Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of the Forms of Mutilation of Information Resources in University Libraries in Abuja**

S/N	Items Statement	Mean	Std. Dev	Decision
11	Tearing of pages of books/journals	2.98	1.01	Agree

12	Underlining of texts/journal	3.01	.88	Agree
13	Highlighting pages of textbooks/journals	3.13	.87	Agree
14	Bending spines of textbooks and journals	2.89	1.11	Agree
15	Using of wet hands to turn pages of books	2.75	.70	Agree
16	Using of wet hands to turn pages of journals	2.74	.81	Agree
17	Cracking of CDs	2.72	.83	Agree
18	Marking of books/journals with biros	3.07	.78	Agree
19	Shading of books/journals with pencils	2.67	.88	Agree
20	Ear-dogging pages of Journals	2.78	.85	Agree
21	Ear-dogging pages of Books	2.72	.77	Agree
22	Making comments on pages of books	2.79	.82	Agree
23	Making comments on pages of journals	2.81	.92	Agree

Results in Table 2 shows that all the items (1-13) on the forms of mutilation of library resources in Universities in Abuja have mean values ranging 2.67 – 3.13. Since the mean values are above the mean benchmark value of 2.50, it implies that all the items constitute the various forms of mutilation of library resources in Universities in Abuja.

**Research question 3:** What are the causes of mutilation of library resources in Universities in Abuja?

**Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis of the Causes of Mutilation of Library Resources in Universities in Abuja**

S/N	Items Statement	Mean	Std Dev.	Decision
24	Poverty/Financial constraints among users	3.42	1.00	Agree
25	Inadequate library Resources	2.37	.82	Disagree
26	Selfish interest among library users	2.41	.80	Disagree
27	High cost of photocopying library resources	3.47	.91	Agree
28	Insufficient library opening hours	2.57	.72	Agree
29	Ignorance of impact on the users	2.63	.83	Agree
30	Rigidity of circulation process	2.43	.81	Disagree
31	Inadequate loan period	2.81	.79	Agree
32	Low quality of library services	2.91	.84	Agree
33	Frustration with library services on the part of users	2.94	.87	Agree
34	Lack of power supply	3.26	.88	Agree
35	High cost of books	2.94	.87	Agree
36	Lack of security men at the reading section	2.89	.90	Agree
37	Inadequate close circuit cameras in the library	2.87	1.02	Agree

Results in Table 3 shows that eleven (11) out of the fourteen (14) items on the causes of mutilation of library resources in Universities in Abuja were agreed by the respondents with mean score ranges between 2.57-3.47 which are above the benchmark of 2.50. Others i.e, item 15, 16 and 20 with mean scores of 2.37, 2.41 and 2.43 respectively were disagreed by the respondents since the mean values were below the benchmark of 2.50.

**Research question 4:** What are the ways of curbing the mutilation of library resources in the libraries under study?

**Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation of the Responses on ways of curbing the Mutilation of Library Resources in University Libraries in Abuja**

S/N	Items Statement	Mean	Std. Dev	Decision
38	Reduction in the cost of photocopying	3.23	.84	Agreed
39	Provision of loan period for users	3.10	.92	Agreed
40	Flexibility of circulation process	2.89	.77	Agreed
41	Extending the library opening and closing hours	3.21	.78	Agreed
42	Proper examining returned books at the circulation desks	3.13	.88	Agreed
43	Proper checking of users when leaving the library	3.22	.76	Agreed
44	Mounting of cameras (CCTV) in the library	3.45	.87	Agreed
45	The use of flash drive and CDs should be prevented	2.79	.91	Agreed
46	Provision of adequate library resources	3.02	.83	Agreed
47	Creating awareness to users on the negative effects of mutilation of resources	3.19	.78	Agreed
48	Reporting offenders in the library/school bulletins	3.24	.88	Agreed

Results in Table 4 shows that all the items (38-48) on the ways of curbing the mutilation of library resources have mean values ranging 2.79 – 3.45. Since the mean values are above the mean benchmark value of 2.50, it implies that all the items constitute the ways of curbing the mutilation of library resources in University libraries in Abuja

### **Discussion**

The first findings of the study revealed that the types of information resources affected by mutilation in University libraries in Abuja are journals, textbooks, magazines, newspapers, projects/theses/dissertations, government publications, term papers, compact discs, CD-ROMs and audio-visual materials. This finding corroborate with that of Idris, Hassan and Abdul-Qadir (2013) who reported that books, newspapers, dictionaries, encyclopedias, journals and magazines were

the types of information resources affected by mutilation. The finding also corroborate with that of Olajide (2017) who reported that books, encyclopedia, dictionary, journals, newspapers, magazines, CD-ROMs and online databases are the information resources affected by mutilation. In a similar vein, the finding agrees with that of Fasea and Adedokun (2016) who reported that information materials mostly affected by mutilation are textbooks, projects/theses/dissertations and newspapers. From this finding therefore, it can be inferred that a plethora of information resources in Universities libraries in Abuja are prone to mutilation.

The second findings of the study revealed that, the forms of mutilation of library resources in Universities in Abuja include, tearing of pages of books/journals, underlining of texts/journal, highlighting pages of textbooks/journals, bending spines of textbooks and journals, using of wet hands to turn pages of books/journals, cracking of CDs, marking of books/journals with biros, shading of books/journals with pencils, ear-dogging pages of books/journals and making comments on pages of books/journals. This finding corroborates with that of Anyaobi and Akpoma (2012) who reported that writing in books is a form of mutilation of library resources among students. Similarly, the finding corroborates with that of Olajide (2017) who reported tearing of pages of books as a form of mutilation. The finding also agrees with that of Fasaie and Adedokun (2016) who examined the abuse of information materials in Academic Libraries by students of tertiary institutions in Ekiti- State, Nigeria and reported the forms of mutilation to include folding of pages of books, and writing on pages of information materials. The findings of this study as observed implied that, undergraduates in Universities in Abuja engage in different forms of mutilation of library resources.

Further, the findings of the study revealed that the causes of mutilation of library resources in Universities in Abuja include, poverty/financial constraints among users, high cost of

photocopying library resources, insufficient library opening hours, ignorance of impact on the users, inadequate loan period, low quality of library services, frustration with library services on the part of users, lack of power supply, high cost of books, lack of security men at the reading section and inadequate close circuit cameras in the library. This finding corroborate with that of Bello (2001) who reported that, security lapses and poor supervision by the library staff contributed highest as a causative factor for library malpractice followed by inadequate number of books in the library which attracted 61.53 %. Similarly, the finding corroborate with that of Olajide (2017) who reported that, university library materials are stolen and mutilated due to inadequate copies of library materials, porous security systems. In a similar vein, Oyesiku, Buraimo and Olusanya (2012) reported the causes of mutilation to include lack of photocopier, ignorance and financial constraint. The finding however disagree with that of Fasae and Adedokun (2016) who examined the abuse of information materials in Academic Libraries by students of tertiary institutions in Ekiti- State and reported that students abuse information materials because they are too lazy, selfish. As observed from the findings of the present study, it can be inferred from this finding that a plethora of factors affect mutilation of library resources in University libraries in Abuja.

Lastly, the findings of the study revealed that reduction in the cost of photocopying, provision of loan period for users, flexibility of circulation process, extending the library opening and closing hours, proper examining returned books at the circulation desks, mounting of cameras (CCTV) in the library and Creating awareness to users on the negative effects of mutilation of resources among others are the ways of curbing the mutilation of library resources in University libraries in Abuja. This finding corroborate Fasea and Adedokun (2016) who reported that mounting of cameras (CCTV) in the library, provision of effective photocopying facilities, proper checking of users when leaving the library and regular acquisition of relevant and current information materials

are the ways of minimizing theft and mutilation of information materials. The finding is also in tandem with that of Olajide (2017) who reported that the use of security personnel at the main entrance, installation of Close Circuit Television (CCTV), installation of electric security system, checking in and out of the library users and personnel, making enough copies of books, window burglary with net, and availability of functional photocopy machine are ways of minimizing theft and mutilation in the library.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

From the findings, the study concluded that a plethora of information resources in university libraries in Abuja are prone to mutilation. Mutilation of library resources is serious problem ravaging Universities libraries in Abuja and if not tackled could adversely affect the quality of information resources provided.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made

- i. The cost of photocopying information materials in the libraries should be subsidized by Universities to enable easy access to information materials by library users. This can help in curbing the issue of mutilation
- ii. University libraries should embark on awareness programmes to educate users who are ignorant of the negative effects of mutilation of library resources to desist from such acts as it lowers their academic performance
- iii. Mutilators should be subjected to heavy and well defined penalties such as withdrawal of library card to serve as deterrent to other users and
- iv. Libraries should adopt the use of new technologies such as Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) to solve some of the problems caused by mutilation of library resources

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