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Patron Behavioural Challenges: A Focus on Violence in Public Libraries within Gweru, Zimbabwe

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Overview of Violence in Public Libraries
Several community service centres are vulnerable to violent behaviour from individuals within and without their respective communities. It appears that communities are becoming increasingly vulnerable to violence, with the evidence thereof being increasingly apparent in the workplace (Farrugia, 2002), with public libraries being no exemption to this. To an ordinary individual, public libraries are quiet, safe havens, where an individual can browse and choose an informational resource to address an information need (International Federation of Library Associations, 2001; Porter, 2014). However, diverse studies that have been carried out have found this image to be misleading, as it has been proven that library staff members operate in an increasingly hostile, antagonistic and intimidating environment (McGrath, 1995; McGrath and Goulding, 1996; Pease, 1995; Farrugia, 2002; Delwiche, 2008; Matthews, 2017). In other terms, public libraries and librarians face diverse risks, and are likely to experience an act of violence or hostility from library users during their working lives. Violence in this regard, should, consequently, be defined from a wide spectrum (McGrath, 1995). This is particularly due to several ethical and moral codes that exist within the global sphere that makes it difficult for one to define violence in a global perspective. As such, diverse authors highlight that violence includes a wide range and varied kind of behaviours from mugging, kicking, spitting, sexual assault, verbal abuse, intimidations without weapons, execration, hostile gestures and shouting (McGrath, 1995). In addition, the World Health Organisation (2016) notes that violence can be viewed as an intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development, or deprivation. One can thus conclude that violence incorporates relational unruly and hostile behaviour, personal and suicidal behaviour and armed conflict.

There are several aspects that lead individuals to undertake acts of violence (Farrugia, 2002). Pease (1995) expounds that individuals within the community at times fail to take ownership of public and community facilities. As public libraries are mostly public property, hence they are vulnerable to crime and vandalism (violence) from community members. The other cause of violence within libraries was cited by Farrugia (2002) who avers that due to the dedication of public librarians in service provision, and their reluctance to discipline patrons, they may become targets of violence. Farrugia (2002) was also quick to denote that if patrons break the library rules and regulations, they are supposed to be punished one way of the other. In his view, during the process of enforcing authority, some patrons may become violent. This entails that the enforcement of authority can also be viewed as a cause of violence in public libraries (Pease, 1995). According to the Liverpool Echo (2001) there are problematic groups within the society that instigate violence. McGrath (1995) elucidates that some individuals may visit the library drunk, as such end up becoming violent within the libraries. The other cause of violence corresponds to individuals living with special needs, for example, individuals with psychiatric disorder or those with difficulties in communicating, and hence may end up becoming violent within public libraries (McGrath, 1995; Farrugia, 2002). Though much has not been written on the effects of violence of public libraries, Hesperian Health Guides (2018) designates that any form of violence has physically, emotional, and cognitive implications upon individuals. Thus, individuals may suffer physically, emotionally, and mentally. In addition, violence within public libraries can lead to loss of property and infrastructure (McGrath, 1995). Therefore, violence in public libraries has negative connotation upon the library staff members, and the library.

Several violence mitigating strategies have been put forward by diverse scholars. Matthews (2017) upholds that public libraries can conduct workshops, programs, and conferences to promote awareness of violence within and without the libraries, and its negative impact on the community. Matthews (2017) also alludes that public libraries could also make partnerships with local law enforcement agencies, community organisations and other social services. Such partnerships would enable the libraries to gain insights and knowledge of dealing with diverse patrons. Delwiche (2008) maintains that workplace aggravation, harassment, and violence are occupational hazards that should be incorporated in the library's risk assessment initiatives. As such, public libraries should undertake diverse risk assessment endeavours that enable them to anticipate incidents that may incite violence. McGrath and Goulding (1996) and Fletcher (2011) denote that improving the work environment through instituting training and customer care initiatives could be a huge factor in mitigating violence.

Research Problem and Questions

Given that public libraries in Gweru are vulnerable and exposed to diverse violent behaviours from patrons and the community at large, the following questions were, thus, crafted to inform the study: Why to individuals undertake violent behaviour within public libraries in Gweru? How is violent behaviour affecting the public libraries in Gweru? How can violent behaviour be mitigated within public libraries in Gweru?

Scope of Study and Methodology

The study was conducted in Gweru, with focus on public libraries in the city. The city had three public libraries, which included the Gweru Memorial Library, the Mkoba 6 Public Library, and the Mtapa Public Library. Though the Mkoba 6 Public Library, and the Mtapa Public Library were closed during the study preparation, they also formed the basis of the study. given the broad perspective of violence. The study made use of the qualitative methodology. This methodology was naturalistic, using a case study of the libraries in Gweru, to have an in-depth understanding of violence and how it manifests in the libraries. The case study enabled the in-depth investigation of a single phenomenon (violence) in its natural setting (libraries in Gweru). This was substantial in establishing opinions, sentiments, insights, and experiences of the study participants. This also ensured that the study was able to establish how individual community members related to the libraries. Interviews with critical stakeholders were used to generate data. These included the Gweru Memorial Library staff members, and the Zimbabwe Library Association (ZimLA) Midlands Branch committee members. Furthermore, given that the Gweru local authority is the governing body of public libraries in the city, henceforth, the study also used interviews to generate data from the council officials in the Department of Housing and Community Development. Questerviews were used to generate data from the library patrons. Questerviews are standardised self-completion questionnaires and questions, used in qualitative studies during in-depth interviews (Adamson, Gooberman-Hill, Woolhead, and Donovan, 2004).

Interviews with ZimLA Midlands Branch Committee members, Gweru Memorial Library staff members, and council officials in the Department of Housing and Community Development provided essential information on causes of violent behaviour within public libraries in Gweru. In addition, such participants further provided information effects of violent behaviour. Such also

provided information ways of addressing violent behavioural challenges. The library patrons provided valuable information on causes of violent behaviour in public libraries, and strategies to mitigate violence in the libraries. To select the Gweru Memorial Library staff members, the study used total population sample. As the library had two library staff members, this hence entailed selecting both staff members to partake in the study. Expert sampling was used to select three individuals from ZimLA. In addition, expert sampling was also used to select the officer that looks at library related issues in the Department of Housing and Community Development at the council. Purposive sampling was used in this regard to generate rich and detailed information that related to the study. In other terms, the study used purposive sampling, entailing participants were being selected purposely an intentionally based on their knowledge concerning public libraries. Patton (2002) explicates that the rationality and strength of purposive sampling conforms to the selection of information rich cases for an in-depth study. To select library patrons, captive sampling technique was used, this entailed selecting patrons that were available during the time the study was conducted. Saturation was reached upon selecting thirteen patrons. The study also made use of observations through a walk through the non-functional libraries in the city, and a sit in the Gweru Memorial Library during designated days and times. To analyse qualitative data, the QDA Miner Elite software was used. This is a qualitative data analysis (QDA) computer software intended for qualitative studies working with rich text-based and/or multimedia information. The software afforded a better comprehension of unstructured data, permitting the categorisation, classification, and organisation of the data according to cases, relationships and themes. Such qualitative data. Words and themes were used to present data as stemming from Nvivo.

Findings and Discussions
The subsequent research findings and discussion were divided into three sections in accord to the research questions, which included causes of violence behaviour, effects of violent behaviour, and strategies to mitigate violent behaviour within the public libraries in Gweru.

Causes of Violence
There are several causes to violent behaviour within public libraries in Gweru. The first cause conforms to situations where some patrons felt incapable, particularly in situations where they perceive issues to be personal. Questerview findings from the patrons revealed that some patrons felt that the general conduct of library staff members may make them feel powerless in certain circumstances. In such situations, patrons may take some services provided personal to an extent of exhibiting violent behaviour. One patron aired the following:
> *Even though the library staff members are kind and courteous, it is apparent that one cannot please everyone. As such some library users may have an attitude towards the staff members, forcing them to be violent upon the staff members, even on petty issues … there are some terminologies used by librarians in relation to certain services that may become obscure to library users, forcing them to become violent due to lack of understanding and cognition.*

According to both ZimLA study participant, any service sector that deals directly with individuals encounters challenges from customers or users. In their view, some patrons may feel powerless due to ignorance, particularly regarding librarians undertaking reference interviews. One of the association members noted that no matter how experienced and good a librarian is in reference services and interviews, there are challenge patrons that may feel that they are being undermined. Such a feeling may lead to violent behaviour. Hence, circumstances that drive

patrons to feel powerless may force them to become violent in their behaviour towards library staff members (Lincoln and Lincoln, 2008).

Information obtained from the patrons also indicated that the other cause of violence may be situations where decisions by the library staff being deemed subjective and arbitrary. In such circumstance patrons may become violent in protest. This aspect was further highlighted one of the ZimLA study participant, who cited that patrons and the general community members may be enraged when certain decisions by library staff members are deemed subjective and seditious in nature. One of the library staff members indicated the subsequent:

> There are circumstances were patrons, and some community members question certain decisions propounded by the library. For instance, a patron may be offended by decision that emanate from the circulation regulations, corresponding to borrowing of reserve and reference materials. In such situations, we try to explain as much as possible the reason for the decision, citing even the procedural and policy documents to support the arguments. Some become satisfied, other, well they may continue to show violent behaviour.

In addition, information obtained from patrons revealed that there are certain policies, procedures, rules, and regulations that have an extensive bearing on their use of the library. In their view, such aspects have the potentials to cause conflict that may result in violence. For instance, issues that have to do with censorship of certain materials and information within the library was a challenge to patrons. To such an extent the library policy that relates to censorship has a potential of causing violence from patrons. In harmony, one of the ZimLA study participant indicated that policies have a potency of causing havoc within the public libraries. As an example, the member indicated that balancing intellectual freedom (needed by patrons), as inscribed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNHR) and the Zimbabwe constitution, and censorship as prescribed by the public library's collection development policy, was a major tenant in causing violence amongst patrons. This, therefore, denotes that violent behaviour within libraries may be due to certain decisions put forward by the library that may be viewed as being subjective (Delwiche, 2008).

As public libraries are open for access to any individual within and without the community, therefore, some patrons and community members may visit the library while drunk. This aspect was noted by all study participants, who cited that the public libraries are exposed to patrons and community members that come to the library drunk, to such an extent that they become violent within the library. To validate this presumption, one of the library staff members noted the following:

> As a public library at times some patrons and community members visit the library drunk. Some may become violent when asked to leave the library, as the rules and regulations of the library indicate that individuals should not visit the library while drunk. While others may pretend not to be drunk and become violent while we offer services to them.

The researcher also observed that the Mkoba 6 Public Library and Mtapa Public Library, though not open, were located near liquor selling enterprises, such that drunk community members have led to the deterioration of the buildings. The Gweru Memorial Library is located near a park, that had also become a haven for drunk community members, homeless individuals, and mentally disturbed individuals. This entailed that the library was vulnerable to violent behaviour from such individuals. In terms of the location of the library, one of the ZimLA study participant alluded to the fact that the possible major reason for instituting libraries in those designated areas

was for access purposes. The participant noted that the libraries are in convenient places that enable respective community members to gain access to the libraries, though there is also that exposure to diverse community members that may turn violent within the library. According to McGrath (1995) the behaviour of drunk individuals and those with psychiatric disorder is mostly unpredictable, and their presence in the library can be intimidating to both staff members and other patrons. In other words, alcohol usually has the effect of enhancing feelings of hostility, leading to a violent situation arising within the library. While individuals with psychiatric disorder are prone to violent behaviour.

Inadequate training and development in areas of dealing with difficult patrons can be a cause of violence within public libraries. One of the ZimLA study participant noted that some patrons are naturally difficult needing special care and treatment. In such situations, if library staff members do not have adequate training and development in that regard, violence may emanate from the patrons. The council official cited that inadequate training and development of staff members in the library may lead to them being unable to deal with difficult and unruly behaviour from patrons. The library staff members noted that they have undergone diverse training and development exercises and initiatives, however, one can never be fully prepared to deal with diverse attitudes and behaviours from patrons, hence disagreements are bound to arise leading to acts of violence. Lack of adequate library staff training, and development is, therefore, a major contributory factor to violence perpetrated by patrons in public libraries (McGrath, 1995; Matthews, 2017)The other cause for violence within the public library corresponded to the payment of fines. One of the ZimLA study participant revealed that due to financial and economic challenges prevailing in Zimbabwe at large, and Gweru particularly, a request to pay fines may enrage patrons to pay library fines. In addition, one of the library staff members revealed that they faced violence, particularly outbursts and insults when they request patrons to pay fines that may have accrued. The library staff member noted the following:

> Issues that have to do with finance are a problem. Even though patrons may have accumulated apparent fines from overdue books, you would find some refusing to pay the fines. At times you would find some patrons lashing at us because of notifying them about overdue dues. In addition, some may try to force us to waiver the fines using intimidation and violent predispositions.

Some patrons expressed that paying of library fines was a problem that may cause some individuals to display violent behavioural tendencies. This is in line with what Farrugia (2002) noted when he says patrons may be irate over a fine, which may force them to exhibit violent behaviour to drive the librarians to waive the payment of such fines.

According to one of the ZimLA study participant, major reason for most library visits is to gain access to relevant and up-to-date information and to address certain library needs. However, at times the library may fail to address certain informational and library needs. This may force patrons to become violent in protest of unquenched information and library needs. This participant further highlighted that failure to address certain information and library needs by patrons may force them to become violent in the library. According to the participant, public libraries are instituted to serve the general community, which has several information and library needs. Such needs are at times complicated to such an extent that it becomes difficult to correspond and address all the needs. According to Lincoln and Lincoln (2008) at times dissatisfaction with the library resources, and stock becomes a major reason for violent

behaviour within public libraries. As such, dissatisfaction by patrons may cause them to become violent within public libraries.

Conflicts within the community is also a cause of violence in public libraries. According one of the ZimLA study participant there are certain conflicts within the community that may cascade to public libraries. The following sentiments were aired by the participant:

> Conflicts are bound to arise in any given community ... acts of conflicts may be due to differing political and social viewpoints, crisis in the community or ethical issues. Not matter the type of conflict, vandalism and violent behaviour may be stretched to diverse public institutions, including public libraries.

Information obtained from the library staff members revealed that such issues of conflict within the community from time to time causes uncertainty within the library. Particularly as the library is vulnerable in that regard.

Information obtained from the patrons revealed that some patrons exhibit violent behaviour due to slow services provision in the libraries. Such patrons noted that there were times when the Gweru Memorial Library was busy, to such an extent that there would be long queues in the circulation desk, which may end up irritating patrons. The following sentiments were aired by one of the library users:

> Lining up for any given service, be it in a library or any sector, is frustrating and aggravating. There are times when the library is busy, with several users forced to line up for borrowing and lending service. Hence, complaints to staff are bound to emanate from the users. Such complaints may lead to aggression, and even violent behaviour.

The researcher also observed that there were times during the month when the library was busy, with queues emanating, particularly in the circulation section. Such queues were observed to be breading grounds for violent behaviour. These findings are in line with what McGrath (1995), who says that queues lessen customers' patience levels, and usually lead to frustration, particularly when they are in a haste to be somewhere else.

Effects of Violent Behaviour

Violence from patrons and the community at large has diverse effects upon the libraries. Such effects have a bearing on library staff members, patrons, library infrastructure and resources. Findings from the library staff members revealed that there are adverse physical and emotional effects of violence. The following were the sentiments noted by one of the staff members:

> It is apparent that when someone gets physical in expressing his/her anger and frustration there are serious pain and injuries that may emanate ... an individual can express his/her anger through lashing out using verbal and insulting words. Such expressions would have an emotional effect, which may lead to lack of enthusiasm to undertake duties and lack of a sense of self-worth.

In addition to these sentiments, the council officer indicated that acts of violence have physical implications. As such library staff members face physical effects of violence, like agony and physical harm to the body, were some patrons may physically man-handle staff members. Furthermore, there are emotional consequences of violence. Such may include demotivation in undertaking duties, which may also arouse an attitude towards patrons. As an example, some patrons may use vulgar language towards library staff member. This was also highlighted by

Hesperian Health Guides (2018) who expounds that violent behaviour has emotional and physical implication on individuals.

In addition to the above sentiments, information from one of the ZimLA study participant indicated that adequate and effective service provision within libraries may be reduced due to acts and behaviours of violence. According to this participant, trauma that may emanate from violence may affect the library staff members from providing services. The council official also highlighted this aspect, through the ensuing sentiments:

> *One cannot dispute that after undergoing violent behaviour, the level of service that an individual may provide can diminish. In addition, the trauma proceeding from violence may restrain an individual from undertaking effective service provision, with fear that the same act or behaviour of violence may repeat itself.*

Therefore, trauma from violence may affect the effectiveness of services provided by library staff members.

Information obtained from questerviews by patrons revealed that violent behaviour has also a bearing on their information seeking and reading habits. In other terms, as some patrons exhibit violent behaviour towards individuals, they also affect other patrons in their library and information access activities. For instance, one of the patrons noted the following:

> *It is difficult for one to concentrate and read adequately when an individual is shouting at one another ... when individuals correspond to violent behaviour, be it physical or verbal, it becomes difficult to concentrate on the issues that would be at hand.*

The above findings were also noted by one of the ZimLA study participant who noted that patrons undertaking their work in the library may be disturbed by violent behaviour by some patrons and community members. This participant designated that the location of all libraries has in the city are in areas prone to noise from the outside community. Such noise may be deemed as violent as these have a bearing on patrons and library staff members. Al-Ahmady, Al-Annaz, and Al-Tammer (2018) contends that noise pollution has adverse effects upon library users and staff members in any given library.

Infrastructural, equipment and material damage are other effects of violence in public libraries. The council official indicated that violence usually leads to library infrastructure and materials damage. According to the participant, as patrons and community members become physically violent, they may damage infrastructure and materials in the library. Library staff members also noted that some library materials have been vandalised by patrons as they exhibited acts of violence in the library.

One of the ZimLA study participant noted the following:

> *If you were to pass through the library in Mkoba 6, and the one in Mtapa, you will realise that the buildings and infrastructure have been vandalised and damaged by diverse community members. Such are acts of violence against the libraries that have caused their deterioration before they have become functional.*

The above connotation was also observed by the researcher, as the infrastructure and materials in the respective libraries have been vandalised by community members. Furthermore, one of the library staff members cited that some patrons may not say much during verbal exchange with staff but may retaliate through tearing off pages from the library books

Violence also may lead to individuals failing to restrain themselves, failing to comply with the library detects, and warnings from the staff members. According to the one of the ZimLA study participant, when patrons exhibit violent behaviour, they end up ignoring library staff members, hence, acting in a rowdy and rude manner. In addition, one of the library staff members also asserted that some patrons become offensive, and ill-manned if engaged on certain aspects within the library. In view of the staff member, such change of behaviour is a result of enragement. Furthermore, the staff members also noted that relations with some patrons have been strained due to violence in the library. The following were the sentiments aired by the staff members:

> *Apart from library patrons expressing violence through insolent and rowdy behaviour, there are some patrons that used to frequent the library, with extensive interpersonal relations with the staff, who now have decided to abstain from the library due to misunderstandings.*

In that regard, violence may lead to unruly behaviour amongst patrons and community members (Porter, 2014), and may lead to patrons seizing to make library visits.

Litigation is another effect of violence. According to the council official patrons and library staff members may at times seek compensation through the courts upon undergoing violence. In addition, the official further highlighted that the council is also keen on litigating individuals that act violently against the council holdings, and staff members. The ZimLA study participants also cited that the major recourse when one has faced acts of violence is instituting litigation charges against the perpetrator(s). One of the ZimLA study participant noted that litigation as an implication of violence, can cause a vicious circle in aftereffects of violence in public libraries. According to this participant, litigation can cause emotional injury, consume financial and time resources to individuals involved. Lande (2015) connotes that litigation is an imperative part of the dispute and violence resolution system, however, it can have an emotional effect upon parties involved.

However, one of the ZimLA study participant revealed that it is always the case that violence in public libraries has negative effects. According to this participant, some systems and policies within libraries have been changed or reviewed due to violence. The following were the sentiments noted by the participant:

> *Logically, violence has negative effects upon libraries, however, it ought to be noted that there are positives that can emerge from violent acts and behaviours. For instance, some of library systems, rules and procedures have been transformed due to violence ... library security measures may be enhanced if a violent act or behaviour that may have happened and compromised the security of the library. As a result, the security system may be enhanced to address future cases ... general library staff behaviour may be transformed when an act of violence occurs. The library management, committee or board may instruct the library staff to be kind and courteous towards patrons, after an act of violence. Furthermore, library staff training needs may be identified when staff members fail to deal with certain library patrons. In that regard, violence may have had positive effects in the improvement of the library operations.*

Therefore, violence in the library may function as a change agent, that forces the library to transform and adjust itself to meet the dynamic needs of its stakeholders. Thus, violence having positive effects upon the functions and operations of the library.

Strategies to Mitigate Violent Behaviour

Diverse strategies were put forward by the study participants in addressing behavioural challenges within public libraries. The first conforms to ensuring that the ambiance of the library is conducive. This would entails certifying that the physical design, arrangement, and enterprise of a library is comfortable to patrons. This aspect was noted by the patrons, who felt that it is usually difficult for individuals to exhibit violent behaviour in areas that are comfortable and ambient. Hence, it is imperative for library waiting areas to be comfortable and less formal in reducing the risk of prompting a hostile response from a patron. Apart from the general environment, the patrons also highlighted the need for library staff members to be open, kind, and courteous to any given type of patrons. One of the ZimLA study participant also highlighted that in any given area, it becomes difficult for individuals to exhibit violent behaviour to staff members that are open, friendly, and kind. In relation to this aspect, Fletcher (2011) places emphasis on the library creating a user-friendly environment, whereby the library staff members are approachable and cordial to their stakeholders.

Security has a bearing on violence in the library. According to the library staff members, the institution of effective security measures can be a means of addressing violence in the library. The following were the propositions made by one of the library staff members:

> *Usually individuals become sceptic in undertaking violent behavioural tendencies in environments that have vivid security measures. For instance, the installation and use of Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) through security cameras can make patrons think again in attempting to become violent. In addition, such a system can provide valuable evidence in a case were litigation is instituted. Thus, deterring further violence from probable perpetrators. Furthermore, the presence of security personnel could reduce the danger of violence ... as an example, the security person may restrict drunk individuals from entering the library premises. Thus, reducing incidents of violence within the library. Also, such personnel may function as an intervention agent, that intervenes when there are altercations within the library.*

This, therefore, entails that enhancing security within the public libraries in Gweru can be an effective measure of curbing violence within the libraries (McGrath, 1995).

It is vital for library staff members to undergo training and development in issues relating to violence. One of the ZimLA study participant specified the following in accord to training and developing staff members:

> *Any librarian should be trained on how to deal with issues within the library confines. As such, the time is now for the ZimLA Midlands Branch to take an initiative-taking role in training librarians within the Midlands Province. In addition, the association should also take-up an advisory role in that regard. Such initiatives can curb violence in libraries, as staff will be equipped with interpersonal and communication skills, as detected by the association.*

In addition, the association participants emphasised that staff members need to be equipped with skills of coping with difficult patrons and intervening to specific situations that may cause violence in the libraries. The library staff members also noted that there is need for continuous training and development in any given areas of conformity within the library sphere, including that of relating to patrons. They further noted that thought they train library interns on diverse areas within the library through their induction courses, there is, however, a need for all staff members to engage in continuous training and development to curtail certain situations.

Questerview findings from the patrons also validated this aspect, as most of the patrons emphasised the essence and need for continuous training and development. McGrath (1995) posits that continuous training and development is imperative as it is usually designed to aid library staff members in coping with difficult situations. This would enable the staff members to be equipped with adequate competencies in dealing complaints and averting conflicts.

Apart from training and developing library staff members around violence, the study found out that there are prevalent cases of violence in the public libraries, there might be a need to reengineer the work processes, structures, and practices. According to one of the ZimLA study participant, for continuous improvement of any organisation, reengineering the work processes may be essential. The participants noted that if patrons were not included in critical decision-making processes, then there may be a need for their inclusion to ensure collective and all-inclusive decisions. According to Bain (2018) reengineering work processes involves the drastic redesign of central processes to accomplish vivid improvements in efficiency, cycle times and quality. In addition, Natarajan (2009) elucidates that re-engineering work processes within libraries plays an essential role for satisfying the patron needs by redesigning the prevailing activities in the library system. Therefore, it is essential for public libraries to undertake reengineering of work processes if there are prevalent cases of violence.

In line with reengineering work processes, the other strategy of mitigating violence in public libraries corresponds to undertaking user assessments and survey on a regular basis. According to the ZimLA study participants, user survey and assessments play a crucial role in ascertaining the library and informational needs of patrons. One of the participants noted the following:

> *For any library to address user needs, there is need for user surveys and assessments. If violent incidents within public libraries in Gweru are to be reduced there is need for the library to undertake such surveys and assessments. Such would ensure that the library is aware of problematic areas that may need urgent redress measures. Thus, enabling the library to anticipate issues that may arise, and cause violent behaviour within the public libraries.*

The library staff members noted that they undertake surveys and assessments, though not on regular basis. Ncube (2017) indicates that user survey and assessments are essential in serving the needs of their users, and in anticipating any need.

The other strategy of mitigating violence within public libraries corresponds to library management support. One of the ZimLA study participant noted that for effectiveness and efficiency of library staff members there is need for management support. Exemplifying on this aspect, the participant signified that that the library management can support the staff members by being sensitive and thoughtful towards them as they have had to deal with challenging situations on a daily basis. This aspect was also noted by the library patrons, who cited that it is possible that at times library staff members may be demotivated in undertaking their duties due to lack of management support. The general demotivation may lead to the staff members being resentful towards the library users, which in turn may force the library users to become violent. This aspect was also noted by McGrath (1995), who emphasises the importance of library management in being considerate and empathetic towards the staff members who are charged with dealing with difficult situations. Thus, the library management should exhibit assurance and

confidence in the library staff members and institute different motivational measures to ensure effective duty and service delivery.

As every department and section in council is managed and directed by bylaws, therefore, public library should have comprehensive bylaws that detail any given scenario. The following was cited by one of the patrons in that regard

> *As a council entity, the public library should have detailed and comprehensive bylaws that relate to any given circumstance within the library ... bylaws should function as pillars for library staff members and library management in decision making. This may retract acts of violence.*

This aspect was further highlighted by one of the ZimLA study participants, indicated that the library should have well established and published policies, rules, and regulations. According to this participant, if proper codes of conformity are well displayed in the library, incidents of violence and misunderstanding may be reduced. McGrath (1995) and Delwiche (2008) noted the importance of rules, regulation, policies, procedures, and byelaws in acting as the backbone for library staff in addressing any library issue

The study also found out that relating to other community-based organisations, institutions, and individuals, such as community leadership, the police, and other relevant stakeholder can mitigate acts of violence in public libraries. According to one of the ZimLA study participant, there is need for continuous engagement with the community. Such engagements would ensure that the library and community are coordinated on various issues. Thus, to ensure sanity in the public library, there should be perfect and working relations with other stakeholders and institutions, the police and community leadership. In addition, information obtained from some patrons revealed that it was essential for the public library to initiate and undertake workshops and conference towards the patron and general Gweru community to appraise them on various library related issues.

Conclusions and Way Forward
Violence in public libraries has diverse causes, which include mostly misunderstandings between the library staff members and patrons, patrons visit the library drunk. There are various consequences within and without the library that emanate from violence in public libraries. The effects of violence in public libraries are mostly negative, with some positives that may stem from violence. The essence of putting in place strategies and systems to reduce violent behaviour cannot be overemphasised. It is essential for library staff members to undertake continuous training and development to become abreast with various patron behavioural challenges and areas of concern. In addition, libraries, should undertake user needs assessment and survey in order to become aware of the needs of the patrons, such that acts that may lead to violence are well anticipated and conformed to on time. Furthermore, it may be imperative for public libraries to have a risk management portfolio, which incorporates issues that have to do with violence, situations and circumstances that may lead to violence. It may also be essential for library staff members that may have undergone violence to be counselled to address the traumatic experiences that may hinder the effectiveness of service provision.

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