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# Assessment Of Library User Security In Sam Jonah Library, University Of Cape Coast

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# **ASSESSMENT OF LIBRARY USER SECURITY IN SAM JONAH LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST**

## **Abstract**

The aim of the study was to assess the security measures put in place to protect patrons of Sam Jonah Library of University of Cape Coast. The descriptive survey design was used in collecting and analyzing data. A questionnaire and interview guide was used to solicit information from respondents. The study adopted the convenient sampling technique for drawing respondents for the study. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics which involved frequencies, tables and percentages. Content analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data. The findings of the study showed that the security breaches that could happen in the library environment include; property theft, verbal abuse, pickpockets, nuisance phone calls and harassment by staff. It was also found out that the major breaches that patrons had actually experienced were; property theft (laptops, mobile phones, calculators and pen drives), nuisance phone calls from fellow users and harassment by staff. It was again discovered that there was no policy on securing the patrons of the library. It was further revealed by management that there were not enough measures put in place to ensure the safety of users even though a conscious effort is being made. In relation to the challenges to securing the safety of users, it was found out that inadequate funds to purchase ICT based security equipment, inadequate security personnel at the entry and exit of the library and inadequate attention placed on the security of users. Also, a patron not being able to differentiate between a library staff and a patron was another challenge. Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, it is recommended among other things that management should install functional closed circuit television cameras, enough staff to patrol in and around the library and proper identification to differentiate library staff from patrons.

**Key words: Library security, user security, security breaches, Sam Jonah Library**

## **Background**

Libraries have over the years been considered as one of the important pillars of civilization (Ebunuwele, Yaya&Krubu, 2011) and for that matter no country can progress without the use of a library. Libraries contain diverse collections which are developed in order to meet the information needs of the user community. In order to achieve the purpose for which a library is established, best practices have to be instituted to ensure the adequate security and protection of library collections from mutilation and theft. Libraries must therefore be very conducive and safe from security threats (Maidabino, 2010) in order to maximize the usage by patrons. In the view of Akor (2013), the primary objective of any security system in any type of library should focus on providing a safe and secure atmosphere for library collections, employees, equipment as well as library users. An atmosphere of safety and security should be provided by library management to users in order for the user to be at ease anytime he or she uses the library either for personal studies or research purposes (Adekanye, 2010). Maidabino (2010) asserts that issues of securing the collection of university libraries has recently become a concern to library management, as such several measures are put in place to mitigate the risk of theft and ensure continuous access to information resources.

There are several researches done on the security of libraries, however, these researches have focused on the security of library materials (Broadhead, 2002; Momodu, 2002; Shashid, 2005; Holt, 2007; Ebunuwele, Yaya & Krubu, 2011). Demonstratively, users are also at risk, as are library materials. Libraries cannot survive without patrons as such patrons should also be

protected from unruly behavior by other users or staff. These behaviors may include personal property theft, offensive phone calls, assault against students by staff and fellow users, pickpockets, and indecent exposure amongst others. In the view of Thomas (2000) a safe and secure atmosphere should always be provided for library users.

### **Problem statement**

Even though, there have been extensive studies concerning security of libraries, they did not look into the security of library users. Studies in libraries the world over and particularly in Ghana, have concentrated on mutilation, vandalism and theft of library materials. Some of such studies include (Broadhead, 2002; Ebunuwele, Yaya & Krubu, 2011; Holt, 2007; Momodu, 2002; Shashid, 2005) Meanwhile, Akor (2013) in his studies on library security indicated that the objective of any library security system should not only focus on library collections and equipment but also on library users. Since the library cannot survive without users, it is imperative to provide a safe and conducive environment for learning and research.

Personal observation in the Sam Jonah Library of University of Cape Coast shows that some measures are put in place to ensure to some extent the prevention of theft of library materials by students. Management of the library has invested in instituting measures (such as use of special barcodes, scanners and theft detection machine placed at the exit of the library and placing staff at the exit to detect stolen materials) to reduce significantly the theft of library materials. However, much as management keeps on thinking about securing library materials, much attention should be placed on the security of the library user, especially during extended library services (where the library closes at 10pm and 5am during examinations). There have been cases of phone snatching, stealing of laptops and pen drives of users. It is therefore not out of place to

find out the measures that are put in place to ensure the security of users of the library in order to encourage ease during their stay in the library. Thus a scientific enquiry is being done to ascertain the extent to which the security system in the library incorporates users.

### **Objectives of the study**

1. Identify the types of breaches against users
2. Identify the security breach experience of patrons
3. Find out the availability of user security policy
4. Investigate the measures put in place to curb the user security breaches
5. Find out the challenges to providing a secured environment to users
6. Make recommendations based on findings

### **Research questions**

1. What are the types of breaches against users?
2. What are the security breach experiences of patrons?
3. Is there a policy in place to secure users?
4. What are the measures put in place to curb the user security breaches
5. What are the challenges to providing a secured environment for users?

### **Literature review**

#### ***Security in libraries***

Security in libraries is very essential. Efficient measures are to be put in place by all library management to ensure that patrons are safe and secured when using the library. It is worthy to

note that human beings are equally at risk as library materials. A library should be a safe and secure place for study and research by patrons. Patrons should always know and be assured that they will be protected from assault from both staff and other users against sexual exposure, indecent exposure, disruptive phone calls, personal property theft (Shuman, 2002). All these disrupt the user from efficiently carrying out the purpose for which he/she visited the library.

In the view of Maidabino (2010), when libraries are left unsecured, several breaches occur. Shuman (2002, cited in Senyah & Lamptey, 2011) asserts that when patrons do not feel secured in places such as libraries, they find ways and means to avoid going there. This is because, they fear to be assaulted, injured or put in some other danger. In a study conducted by Oder (2004), it was indicated that security measures including efficient supervision, proper surveillance and patrolling of trained personnel in and around the library premises are lacking in libraries. This is because the major aim of a security system in libraries as outlined by Akor (2013) should always target the provision of secured environment for employees, library materials (books and equipment) as well as library patrons. However, protecting the library user from all sorts of crimes is often not given attention by library management.

In a study conducted by Rajendra (2005), it was suggested that security in libraries should be taken into consideration during the construction of the library so that the necessary equipment may be installed before the completion of the building. This, in the view of Rajendra, will help curb the security breaches in the library.

On the issue of surveillance and proper monitoring of the library and every user that enters, McComb (2004) stressed that video surveillance as well as closed-circuit television gadgets

should be used to record and monitor movements of patrons in the library in order to deter people from committing breaches against patrons whilst ensuring safety. McComb (2004) explained further that this closed-circuit camera may be used to track the movement of visitors and library staff, monitor reading areas and work stations and ensure adequate safety and security of the library premises.

All the aforementioned security breaches against users are problems associated with usage of the library and therefore should be of great concern to library management. According to Brown (2007), there should be harmonization of policies to deal with the security and safety issues in libraries. If this is done, library management will find it easier to apply all the measures that will be indicated in the policy so as to maximize the safety and security of the library collections, patrons and users. It is therefore recommended that the information professionals who include librarians and information managers must not underestimate the need for instituting measures and documenting policies for securing users of the library. This is because the library cannot function effectively without users.

## **Methodology**

The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. Surveys are used to collect not only quantitative but also qualitative data from a representative sample (Payne, 2004). With descriptive survey, information is collected without manipulating the environment. Two main instruments were used to elicit information for the study; this includes interview and questionnaire. A total of 250 questionnaires were given to all categories of library users through convenient sampling method during the examinations period. This is because during examination

time the patronage of the library increases. This was followed by semi- structured interview with library management in order to determine the availability of policies to protect users of the library from security breaches and to identify the measures put in place to curb breaches against users and also to elicit firsthand information from management on some other important issues. The reference librarian was used for the interview because she was in charge of handling the complaints of users. Also other reference staff report to her on every issue that has to do with library patrons.

The Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) version 20 was used to analyze the quantitative data. Frequency distribution tables and percentages were used to measure the distribution of responses. In the analysis of data from the interview, the recorded responses of the library management were transcribed into word document and read through and coded according to the respective themes to bring out the emerging patterns and categories which provided the basis of analysis. This was also done according to the objective which include; types of security breach against users, policy on security breaches, measures to curb security breaches, challenges to providing a secured library environment and recommendations.

## **ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS**

Out of the 250 questionnaires distributed 223 (89.2%) were completed and submitted. The analysis was therefore based on the 223 questionnaires retrieved and the interview conducted with the reference librarian of Sam Jonah Library.

## Background of respondents

The background information sought was their gender and category of user. Out of the two hundred and twenty three respondents, eighty nine (89) representing 39.9% were females whilst one hundred and thirty four (134) representing 60.1% were males. This indicates that during the period of data collection more males than females used the library. On the category of patrons, results shows that administrative staff were 2 (0.89%), lecturers were 6 (2.63), post graduates were 11(4.93) and undergraduates were 204(91.4%). It could be deduced that undergraduates patronize the library more than any category of users. These variables were studied to provide the context within which the study was situated.

## Types of breaches against users

Since the library is a public place, patrons may be susceptible to several security breaches. This objective was to find out from respondents the extent to which they agree or disagree that the outlined breaches could occur in Sam Jonah Library. Responses are depicted in Table 1 below

Table 1: Types of breaches against library patrons

Variable	Frequency and Percentage					Rank
	SD	D	N	A	SA	
Property theft	4(1.79%)	13(5.83%)	10(4.48%)	37(16.59%)	159(71.30%)	4.51
Nuisance phone calls from fellow patrons	0(0.00%)	6(2.69%)	9(4.04%)	73(32.73%)	135(60.54%)	4.51
Harassment by staff	17(7.62%)	5(2.24%)	3(1.35%)	59(26.46%)	139(62.33%)	4.46
Pickpockets	29(13.00%)	33(14.80%)	19(8.52%)	89(39.91%)	53(23.77%)	3.74
Indecent exposure	33(14.80%)	12(5.38%)	6(2.69%)	48(21.52%)	124(55.61%)	4.24
Verbal abuse	23(10.31%)	9(4.04%)	9(4.04%)	81(36.32%)	101(45.29%)	4.19

Unsolicited sexual harassment	42(18.83%)	51(22.87%)	49(21.97%)	33(14.80%)	48(21.52%)	3.19
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Source: field data, May, 2016

The findings from table one revealed that one hundred and fifty nine (159) respondents, representing 71.30% strongly agreed that property theft is a security breach that can happen in the library. On the part of nuisance phone calls from fellow users, one hundred and thirty five (135) respondents, representing 60.54% also agreed strongly that it may happen in the library premises. Harassment by staff was also considered by respondent. 139(62.33%) of respondents strongly agreed, however, 89(39.91%) of respondents agreed that pickpocketing is yet another security breach that may occur in libraries. On the issue of verbal abuse 101 (45.29%) strongly agreed whilst 51 (22.87%) agreed and 48(21.52) disagreed to the fact that unsolicited sexual harassment may occur in libraries.

It could be deduced from the findings that, respondents attested to the fact that property theft, nuisance phone calls from fellow users, harassment by staff, indecent exposure and verbal abuse are the security breaches that are capable of happening in the library. By extension, it could be said that the patrons of libraries are vulnerable to security breaches earlier mentioned and as such need to be protected at all times.

### **Security breaches against users**

It was prudent for the researcher to find out from patrons whether they had experienced any of the above mentioned security breaches. It is essential to note that this was a multiple response

item implying that a respondent could have suffered more than one security breach. The responses are shown on table two below

Table 2: Security breaches against library patrons

Security breaches	Frequency	Percent
Property theft	98	43.95
Nuisance phone calls	172	77.13
Harassment by staff	159	71.30
Indecent exposure	21	9.42
Verbal abuse	33	14.79
Unsolicited sexual harassment	5	2.24
None of the above	42	18.83

Source: field data, May, 2016

From Table 2 it could be seen that aside 42(18.83%) of respondents who indicated that they had never experienced any of the security breaches in the library before, an overwhelming respondents 172 (77.13) indicated that nuisance phone calls was a major security breach they had experienced. Following this was harassment by staff 159 (71.30). On the aspect of property theft, 98 (43.95) of respondents confirmed they had experienced this security breach. Verbal abuse was the next one which had 33 (14.79) respondents. Indecent exposure and unsolicited sexual harassment followed with 9.42% and 2.42% respectively.

From the responses given, it is clear that a significant majority of the respondents had experienced nuisance phone calls from fellow users, harassment by staff and property theft. In a bid to confirm this from management of the library, an interview was conducted to ascertain the

reported cases of security breaches against users. It was revealed from the interview that property theft (such as the theft of mobile phones, calculators, laptops and handouts) and nuisance phone calls from users were the most frequently reported and observed security breach against users. It may also be stated that harassment from staff is also another breach which was indicated by respondents of the questionnaire but management indicated that they are not regularly reported by users. It should be noted that, even though few respondents indicated unsolicited sexual harassment, it still remains a serious security breach that needs to be effectively dealt with. The reference librarian indicated in the interview that reasons that may be given to this happening in the library is that regular power outages causes darkness in some areas of the library and delinquent users may want to capitalize on the unavailability of light (due to faulty generators and inadequate rechargeable lamps) and may try to force other users into sexual activity.

It could be added that some users faced certain challenges such as indecent exposure, verbal abuse, harassment by staff and unsolicited sexual abuse which were not reported. The frequently reported cases were theft of property and nuisance phone calls. This confirms the findings of Shuman (2002), who found out in a similar study that patrons face breaches such as indecent exposure, disruptive phone call and property theft. Shuman (2002) further suggested that patrons of the library should at all times be assured of protection from certain security breaches such as indecent exposure, disruptive phone calls and property theft either by staff or fellow users of the library.

## **Policy on user security**

In a quest to know whether there was any policy on security of patrons in the library or not, an interview with the reference librarian indicated that there was no documented policy to safeguarding the security and safety of the library user. It was however explained that the library had put measures in place to curb the use of mobile phones in the library and also, staff were put at the entrance of the library to check users who exit. It was further added that this measure had however not been very effective; because there were still growing numbers of nuisance phone calls and property theft by users. It was explained by the reference librarian that some users abused other library users by telling them they were library staff because there was no indication to differentiate the library staff from library patrons. This gave them the opportunity to take users phones, laptops and other valuables from other user and run away with them. It was for this reason suggested by library management that very stringent measures are to be put in place to ensure this measure and other measures that bother on the security of users as well as the library collections are strictly put in place and adhered to. In a similar study conducted by Brown (2007) it was suggested that there should be clearly written and documented policy on security in all libraries. These policies according to Brown (2007) should be made to incorporate all issues that border on the security of library usage. That is, there should be synchronization of every security measure or policy well spelt and written to address all the security and safety issues in libraries as well as regular evaluation which will help add certain measures as well as drop certain measures that may not be of use to the security of libraries.

## Measures put in place to curb the security breaches

In order to ensure the safety of patrons of the library, several measures are to be put in place to secure the users of the library at any point in time. The researcher therefore deemed it necessary to find out whether users knew of any security measures put in place by library management to curb the security breaches. The following responses shown on table 3 were indicated by respondents.

Table 3: measures put in place to curb the security breaches

Variable	Frequency and Percentage					Rank
	SD	D	N	A	SA	
Staff frequently glance through various floors and reading areas	105(47.08%)	83(37.21%)	9(4.04%)	11(4.93%)	15(6.72%)	4.18
Well trained security men at the entrance of the library	61(27.35%)	111(49.76%)	15(6.73%)	6(2.69%)	30(13.45%)	4.15
Ensuring only authorized users use the library	151(67.71%)	44(19.73%)	28(12.56%)	0(%)	0(%)	4.55
Inspection of ID before entry	201(90.13%)	12(5.38%)	10(4.48%)	0(%)	0(%)	4.86
Installation of CCTV camera	97(43.49%)	98(43.95%)	20(8.97%)	2(0.90%)	6(2.69%)	4.31
Security alarm	56(25.11%)	91(40.81%)	36(16.14%)	29(13.01%)	11(4.93%)	3.84

Source: Field data, May 2016

Table 3 depicts that 105 (47.08%) and 83(37.21%) strongly disagreed and disagreed to the fact that staff frequently glance through various floors of the library. Again, 61(27.35) and

111(49.76) strongly disagreed and disagreed that there are well trained security men at the entrance of the library. A greater number of respondents (67.71%) again, disagreed that the library ensures only authorized users use the library. Also, 201(90.13%) respondents disagreed that ID cards are inspected before entry into the library. On installation of CCTV camera in the library it was found out that 97(43.49%) of respondents strongly disagreed and 98(43.95%) disagreed that it exists in the library. Finally, 91 respondents, representing (40.81%) disagreed that the library had put in place security alarms to curb the breaches against users.

Management indicated that measures put in place by library management is fining and seizing of phones from users who make phone calls in the library premises and periodic rounds of supervisors. Management therefore indicated that a lot have to be done in relation to securing patrons of the Sam Jonah library because according to management there should be more measures than what is already in place.

It could be deduced from the above that not enough measures have been put in place by management of Sam Jonah. This insufficient measures explain why there are several breaches against users of the library. This is in agreement with a statement made by Maidabino (2010) that several breaches against users occur when libraries do not put enough measures in place to secure the library, this is because when patrons do not feel secured and safe in public places such as libraries, they tend to avoid going to these places due to the fear of being assaulted or put in some other danger (Senyah & Lamptey, 2011). For this reason Akor (2013) in his research suggests that secured environment should always be provided for library materials, employees and library patrons.

## **Challenges to providing a secured environment for library patrons**

Challenges to providing a secured environment for library patrons was also sought by the researcher. It was identified through the interview that inadequate funds to purchase ICT based equipment to monitor the entry and exit of users, inadequate qualified security personnel and library staff to patrol in and around the library premises and inadequate attention placed on the security of patrons by management as the major challenges to providing a secured environment for patrons of the library. In the view of McComb (2004) there should be enough gadgets such as closed circuit television to record as well as monitor the movements of patrons in the library. Management should for that matter generate funds internally so as to purchase the needed equipment to ensure the security of library users. Again, another challenge indicated was the challenge of patrons differentiating between library staff and library users. This is because there was nothing to indicate to patrons who was a library staff or who was not. It was further stated by management that ineffectiveness of the Information Communication Technology (ICT) System in the library is yet another challenge to ensuring the security of library patrons.

Security in libraries (which includes security of patrons) should always be taken into consideration during construction of the library. This in the view of Rajendra (2005) this will help curb the security breaches in libraries. This is because; video surveillance and other equipment to safe guard the library should be installed in the course of building the library. This is why Maidabino (2010) stress in his study that information professionals are to have vibrant vision by paying maximum attention to the realities of security breaches in academic libraries.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose set out for this research was to find out the measures put in place by library management to ensuring the safety and security of patrons of Sam Jonah Library in University of Cape Coast. The study revealed that there are a lot of security breaches that may happen at Sam Jonah Library in university of Cape Coast. These security breaches included property theft, nuisance phone calls by library users, harassment by staff and verbal abuse.

It was revealed that property theft, nuisance phone calls and harassment by staff were the most prevalent security breaches experienced by patrons. And the most reported security breach against users was property theft. Nuisance phone calls and harassment by staff were also indicated by respondents but the interview revealed that they were not reported frequently. There was also no documented policy on ensuring the safety of users especially on property theft. The only measure put in place was the fine on making phone calls in the library and periodic patrol of the library floors by staff. The fine on mobile usage was not efficiently adhered to by users and some users also capitalized on this measure to harass users whenever they were caught making a phone call. Further, other users also acted as library staff and took away the property of fellow users because there was nothing to differentiate a staff from a user. Due to the fact that the library cannot survive without users, enough measures should be put in place to ensure the security and safety of patrons.

## **Recommendation**

In a bid to find out from respondents what could be done to improve security of patrons the following recommendations were made;

- The library management of University of Cape Coast should set strict rules on the usage of mobile phones in the library and delinquents should be adequately dealt with when caught. This will serve as a deterrent to other users
- Again, library management should delegate officials to write proposal to donor agencies for financial assistance in order purchase and install functional Closed-Circuit Television Cameras (CCTV) on all floors and sections of the library, particularly at those places corners of the library where serious breach such as unsolicited sexual harassment may occur. After installation, the CCTV should be regularly monitored by a staff in order to relay information to management on daily basis. This will help to significantly curb a lot of security breaches that users encounter. It will also help to detect persons who commit a particular offense at a particular time.
- Library management should see to it that qualified security personnel are put at the entrance and exit of the library. This is because their presence alone may scare users with ill intentions. Again, more qualified security should be made to glance through the reading areas of the library to scare patrons who have the intention of causing harm to other patrons as well as preventing other patrons to pose as library staff.
- Library management should once again communicate to the university management about the breaches that occur in the library and demand for more security personnel to be posted to the library. These security personnel would be made to patrol on the various floors so as to deter users who may have ill intention of committing any form of breach.
- Adequate training should be given to staff by management on customer care. This will equip staff with the requisite knowledge to deal very well with users in an ethical manner so that users will not feel harassed by staff. Staff who would be found or reported harassing users should be dealt with.

- Strict inspection of student ID cards should be done by staff of library before allowing entry so that unauthorized users may be prevented from using the library. In addition, special identification should be given to staff by management so that users will be able to differentiate between a library staff and a user. With this special identification, management should see to the strict usage it so that users will always know the difference. This will help curtail those who act as staff and take users' phones and laptops as well as other important properties from users.

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