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THE CURBING OF DEVIANT BEHAVIOR OF LIBRARY USERS: CLARKE'S SITUATIONAL CRIME PREVENTION (SCP) THEORY APPROACH

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Abstract

This study investigated the deviant behavior of library users using Clarke's Situational Crime Prevention (SCP) theory approach in the Niger Delta Area, Nigeria. Using a descriptive survey research design, 108 librarians participated in the study (quota sampling was used making it 18 library staff each). Six university libraries were used for the study. A structured questionnaire was employed for data gathering. Data collected/gathered were analyzed using Mean statistics. The study revealed that users' view that there is little or no danger of being apprehended, insufficient library security personnel, porous library security were the circumstantial causes of deviant/abnormal behaviours amongst undergraduate users in academic libraries in the Niger Delta Area, Nigeria; that the most common deviant behaviours amongst undergraduate student users were stealing/pilfering of library materials, Mutilation of library materials and Mishandling of computers in that order; that deviant behaviours amongst undergraduate students have a negative impact on sustainable library growth. The study recommended amongst others stricter use of Clarke's Situational Crime Prevention (SCP) Theory approach, the deployment of enough staff to oversee activities in reading areas where CCTV cameras are lacking and installing security gadgets like Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tags on library books; and CCTV cameras.

Keywords: Deviant Behavior, Reducing deviant behavior, Clarke's Situational Crime Prevention (SCP) approach, University Libraries, Library Users, Niger Delta Area, Nigeria

Introduction

The primary goal of libraries and librarians has always been to create a culture of intellectual freedom, first-rate learning environments, and easy access to all information sources in a calm setting. This explains why the harsh realities of violence, risk, danger, dread, or anxiety are not part of our mental image of the library. According to Osagie and Olumuyiwa (2022), libraries are typically thought of as peaceful spaces where people may study and spend quiet time. They can also feel free to explore, locate, and apply information found in the human intellectual records. However, it is evident that due to the fact that certain of the users for whom library services are offered frequently break library rules by showing deviant behaviors, library materials, staff, and patrons are increasingly at risk. Any action or inaction that goes against the normative expectations, understandings, or laws of social systems has been referred to as deviant behavior. Lim, Teh, and Benjamin (2016) acknowledged that someone who behaves or holds opinions that

deviate from accepted norms is referred to as a deviant. Library patrons oppose rules or violate them when their beliefs conflict with what is seen to be normal and acceptable. Therefore, according to Eruvwe and Enite (2019), a deviant library user is anyone who disobeys library policies and poses a risk to staff, other patrons, and the library's intellectual property. Deviant behavior in libraries can take many forms, such as stealing, vandalism, mutilation, abuse, and rudeness.

Academic libraries in Nigeria have also reported on a number of deviant behavior issues. Akinola, (2020) and Ubogu (2019) noted that inappropriate or deviant behavior has become commonplace in Nigerian university libraries. Examples include theft and mutilation, hiding library materials, refusing to return overdue borrowed materials, taking phone calls in the reading hall, smuggling food and beverages into the library reading room, and defacing or mutilating library books. If these expanding behaviors are not corrected, the majority of library services may become ineffectual (Fashola & Oyadeji, 2019).

The following are research questions that guided the study:

What are the circumstantial causes of deviant/abnormal behaviours among undergraduate student users of academic libraries in the Niger Delta Area, Nigeria?

What are the most common abnormal behaviours among undergraduate student users in academic libraries in the Niger Delta Area, Nigeria?

What are the perceived consequences of abnormal behaviour on service delivery in academic libraries in the Niger Delta Area, Nigeria?

How can libraries control abnormal conduct/behaviour amongst undergraduate users in academic libraries in the Niger Delta Area, Nigeria?

Literature Review

Causes of Deviant Behaviour

Three main goals of all attempts to regulate crime are brought into focus by controlling deviant behavior in libraries: knowing the causes, prevalence, and impact of deviant behavior on the provision of library services. There are two reasons for deviant behavior in Nigerian academic libraries: situational or external causes and dispositional or internal factors. According to dispositional attributions, a person's behaviour is a result of their personality or disposition. Dispositional attribution, according to McLeod (2012), attributes aberrant behaviours to a person's inner qualities—such as temperament, heredity, and particular personality traits—rather than external factors. On the other hand, situational attributions essentially assert that an individual's behaviour is a result of the circumstances surrounding them. The external or situational component attributes the reason of deviant behaviours to external events or situational elements (such as the library's surroundings or situational qualities) as opposed to internal traits (McLeod, 2012). Situational attribution places the blame for patron misbehaviour on the library setting, whereas dispositional attribution places the blame on the individuals who engage in deviant behaviour. Ubogu (2019) citing Cromwell, Alexander, and Dotson (2008), noted that it starts with an analysis of the conditions that led to a criminal occurrence, and it incorporates discrete, controllable environmental adjustments to lessen the likelihood that those events would occur. Situational attributions center on the circumstances around criminal activity rather than the criminals themselves.

The Most Common Deviant Behaviour

The goals of library regulations are to uphold an organized atmosphere that facilitates the efficient provision of library and information services in support of the teaching, learning,

research, and community service requirements that led to the establishment of universities. Deviant behaviour in the context of student library users refers to disobedient, damaging, or unfavorable attitudes toward library policies and procedures. When describing deviant behaviors in libraries, a variety of negative terms have been used, taking into account the detrimental effects of such behaviours - illegal practices (Akinola, 2020); defiant attitude (Eruvwe & Enite, 2019); security challenges and threat (Dzarma & Jibasen, 2015); delinquent acts or behaviors (Ubogu 2019); resource vandalism (Isebe, 2015); disruptive or inappropriate behaviors (Bakare et al., 2021). Recently, scholars in the fields of library and information science have become increasingly interested in deviant behaviours in university libraries in Nigeria. Akinola (2020) uses Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Ikeji Arakeji as a case study to investigate the security state of library resources and crime concerns in Nigerian university libraries. The study and Chukwusa (2015) noted that the library faces a variety of security and criminal issues; particularly stealing and pilfering (stealing).

In a comparative evaluation of disruptive behaviours conducted by users in a few university libraries in Kwara State, Nigeria, Bakare et al. (2021) found that the most common disruptive behaviours displayed by users in the libraries were constant loud noises, material theft and mutilation, as well as fights, struggles, and improper use of the space. Fashola and Oyadeyi (2019) claimed that common deviant behaviors in Nigerian university libraries include: mutilation of library resources, stealing, damage, or defacing library materials and walls. In the library, having food and beverages (Eruvwe & Enite, 2019) trespassing or staying put while watching porn on the internet (Bakare et al., 2021). Rudeness, verbal abuse directed towards library workers (Ubogu, 2019), and peer intimidation, harassment, and assault (Bakare et al., 2021). Book theft, book mutilation, writing on books with pens or pencils, storing books past due, eating or drinking in the library, hiding books on other shelves, and taking phone calls while in the library are examples of these deviant behaviours. They happen in places where there is a high likelihood of success and a low danger of being discovered. If ignored, this could impede the efficient provision of library services and the library's ability to serve the university's responsibilities for teaching research, and community service.

Perceived Consequences of Abnormal/ Deviant Behavior

Bakare et al. (2021) stated that behaviors are deemed disruptive if they go against the library's code of conduct, policies, and procedures, physically harm collections, buildings, or equipment, or interfere with the regular flow of events and operations. The freedom of other users to use the variety of services provided by academic library facilities in support of academic activity is violated by disruptive behaviour. According to Pascaru-Goncear (2023) and Awujola and Olapade (2015), a deviant user is someone who disobeys the norms and regulations of the library/institution by stealing, mutilating, or engaging in other abusive behaviour. As a result, they pose a risk to the intellectual property of the library, staff members, and other patrons.

Deviant behaviour is harmful to the efficient running of libraries; however numerous views support the value of libraries in society. These include the Structural Functionalism Theory (SFT), which distinguishes several demographic segments within a community and views deviant behaviours as having a positive role in society (Dullas, Yncierto, Labiano, & Marcelo, 2021). According to this school of thought, abnormal behavior aids in drawing boundaries between what is and isn't acceptable behaviour. According to Durkheim (2005), cited in Nickerson (2021), the disintegration of social norms causes rapid social change, aids in people's adaptation to it, and fosters social unity by setting "us" apart from "them." Deviance can upset the social equilibrium, but in the process of re-establishing it, society may modify social norms.

Deviant behavior thus challenges norms while fostering social cohesion, which over time can lead to social stability (Dullas et al., 2021).

Mitigating Abnormal/Deviant Behaviour amongst Undergraduate Library Users

Ubogu (2019) investigated security issues and vandalism in academic libraries. The study suggested an enhanced security system, preferably a contemporary device that would guarantee that the majority of the resources are safeguarded, and links vandalism and insecurity to the library's inadequate and insufficient protection. Eruvwe and Enite (2019) also look into the mechanisms that govern deviant behaviour among library users in government-owned universities in Delta State, Nigeria. They suggested that new library users be properly oriented during library instruction classes, with a focus on norms and regulations. Urhiewhu, Emojorho, and Omah (2018) claimed that some library patrons have made the decision to be uncontrollable, displaying inappropriate and deviant behaviour as well as flagrant misusing the library's resources. In most cases, this prevents the library—a vital institution in human civilization—from providing its patrons with the best possible services.

In order to address deviant behaviors among undergraduate students using academic libraries in Delta State, Nigeria, we thus examine the suitability of extending Clarke's Situational Crime Prevention Theory—a theory developed in the criminal justice domain—to address physical crimes (Clarke, 1980).

Clarke's Situational Crime Prevention Theory

Deviant behaviours are, in the parlance of libraries, actions that violate generally accepted norms and endanger the library's regular operations. Because deviant behavior in libraries is dependent on specific circumstances or settings within the library, it is seen as a situational crime.

According to Clarke's Situational Crime Prevention (SCP) Theory, the degree of rationalization, perceived benefits, and perceived costs all influence the likelihood of crime. In order to raise perceived costs, one needs to, in the words of Clarke (1980), both raise the perceived risk (chance of getting caught) and the perceived effort involved in executing the crime.

According to situational crime prevention theory, situational circumstances should directly prevent crimes from being committed (i.e. minimize opportunities), but they also have a greater impact on criminals' perceptions of the costs and advantages of their actions (Clarke, 1980). It suggests that crimes are opportunistic in character and happen when there is a low danger of being detected and a high chance of succeeding. Crime will be committed in situations where there is little chance of being caught - for example, when there is no burglary proof and no security guard on duty—and where the perceived cost of committing the crime is less than the perceived reward. If, on the other hand, the perceived cost of committing the crime is greater than the perceived profit, the crime will not be committed in areas where there is a significant danger of being detected, such as those with robust burglary proof and security officers on duty.

In support of SCP, Crime Opportunity Theory noted that criminals select targets that present a large return with little work and risk because they make logical decisions. Therefore, the likelihood of a crime occurring in a library depends on two factors: the existence of at least one motivated criminal who is prepared and eager to commit a crime in a library, as well as the characteristics of the library setting in which that offender is situated to maximize the likelihood of crime (Jeffery, 1977; Hindelang, 1978).

Research Methodology

The research design used in the study was a descriptive survey. The goal of the descriptive research design is to accurately describe or provide information about the type and extent of prevalence by examining conditions, opinions, objects, attitudes, individuals, or ideas. Academic librarians and library officers from selected University libraries in the Niger Delta Area, Nigeria made up the study population. Out of the 108 respondents purposively selected and further treated using the quota sampling technique (18 respondents from each library), 92 of them were used for this study. Frequency count and Mean statistics were used to analyse the study.

Table 1: Population of the Study

S/N	Institutions	No. Administered	No. Retrieved
1.	University of Port-Harcourt (UNIPORT)	18	15
2.	Delta State University, Abraka. (DELSU)	18	18
3.	Federal University of Technology, Akure (FUTA)	18	13
4.	University of Benin (UNIBEN)	18	12
5.	Federal University of Technology, Akure (FUTO)	18	16
6.	Niger Delta University (NDU), Amassoma	18	18
	Total	108	92

Table 1 revealed that out of the 108 respondents purposively selected and further treated using the quota sampling technique, 92 (85%) of them were used for this study.

Table 2: Circumstantial causes of abnormal behaviours amongst undergraduate users in academic libraries in the Niger Delta Area, Nigeria

S/N	Circumstantial Causes of Abnormal Behaviour	Agree 3	Undecided 2	Disagree 1	Mean Score
1.	Users view that there is little or no danger of being apprehended.	76	2	16	2.70
2.	Porous library security.	59	-	33	2.28
3.	Inadequate lighting.	15	2	75	1.35
4.	Feeling that there is little or no punishment when caught.	19	4	69	1.46
5.	Carelessness on the part of the library staff.	37	-	55	1.80
6.	Insufficient library security personnel.	65	9	18	2.51
7.	Lack of knowledge of the enormity of library offences.	45	7	40	2.05
8.	Hostile library policy.	12	3	77	1.20

9.	Inadequate knowledge of library rules.	40	-	52	1.87
	Grand Mean				1.91

Cutoff Point 2.00

With 2.00 as the mean score cutoff point, table 1 shows that users' view that there is little or no danger of being apprehended (2.70), insufficient library security personnel (2.51), porous library security (2.28) and lack of knowledge of the enormity of library offences (2.05) in that order were the circumstance causes of abnormal behaviours amongst undergraduate users in academic libraries in the Niger Delta Area, Nigeria. However, the least among the circumstantial behaviours was for hostile library policy (1.20).

Table 2: The most common abnormal behaviours amongst undergraduate student users of academic libraries in the Niger Delta Area, Nigeria

S/N	Abnormal Behaviour	Agree 3	Undecided 2	Disagree 1	Mean Score
1.	Noise making in the library	43	8	41	2.02
2.	Pilfering of library materials	86	-	6	2.87
3.	Loafing around the library	24	2	66	1.54
4.	Mutilation of library materials	77	-	15	2.67
5.	Mishandling of computers	62	4	26	2.39
6.	Disrespect to library staff	26	-	66	1.57
7.	Quarrelling amongst users	8	-	84	1.17
8.	Smoking in the library	-		92	1.00
	Grand Mean				1.90

Cutoff Point 2.00

Table 2 shows that the most common deviant behaviours amongst undergraduate student users of academic libraries in the Niger Delta Area, Nigeria are stealing/pilfering of library materials (2.87), Mutilation of library materials (2.67) and Mishandling of computers (2.39) in that order.

Table 3: Perceived consequences of abnormal behaviour on library service delivery in academic libraries in the Niger Delta Area, Nigeria

S/N	Consequences of Abnormal Behaviour	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Mean Score
1.	Has a harmful effect on library progress.	71	-	21	2.54
2.	Brings low the professed value of library services.	76	2	14	2.51
3.	Has negative consequences on the image of the library.	67	2	23	2.48
4.	Frustrates library staff efforts.	80	-	12	2.74
5.	Limits customer's learning/research prospect.	67	3	22	2.49
6.	Diminishes library resources/services quality.	68	6	18	2.54
7.	Makes library usage uninteresting.	72	4	16	2.61
	Grand Mean				2.56

Table 3 revealed that with 2.00 as the mean score cutoff point, all the seven items listed were consequences of abnormal behaviours; because they all had mean scores above the cutoff point. It frustrates library staff efforts (2.74), makes library usage uninteresting (2.61), and diminishes library resources/services quality (2.54) which are the items with the highest consequences. This shows that deviant behaviours amongst undergraduate students have negative impact on sustainable library growth.

Table 4: Minimizing abnormal behaviours amongst student users of academic libraries in the Niger Delta Area, Nigeria

S/N	Abnormal behaviours can be reduced in the library by:	Agree 3	Undecided 2	Disagree 1	Mean Score
1.	Deviant prevention actions should be adopted to adequately enhance perceived costs and reduce perceived benefits by the deviants.	82	-	10	2.78
2.	Putting up counseling units to counsel deviant users of the library.	86	-	6	2.87
3.	Instituting students' disciplinary committee to decide cases of Students' infringement of library rules.	75	-	17	2.63
4.	Installing security gadgets like Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tags on library books; and CCTV cameras.	92	-	-	3.00
5.	Close supervision of library user's activities.	70	-	12	2.41
6.	Provision of periodic user education to library users.	71	-	21	2.54
7.	Setting up a common room where students can make calls and possibly have a discussion group.	82	-	10	2.78
8.	Acquisition of multiple copies of books in order to enhance borrowing opportunities.	75	-	17	2.63
9.	Deploying enough staff to oversee activities in reading areas where CCTV cameras are lacking.	92	-	-	3.00

Table 4 revealed that all 9 items were recognized by the respondents as remedies that would reduce the deviant behavior of users in university libraries. All the items have mean cutoff points above 2.00. Deploying enough staff to oversee activities in reading areas where CCTV cameras are lacking and installing security gadgets like Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tags on library books; and CCTV cameras had 3.00 as mean score each; and are the highest amongst other remedies that would minimize deviant behavior in the academic libraries.

Discussion of Findings

On circumstantial causes of deviant behavior, the study revealed that Users' view that there is little or no danger of being apprehended, insufficient library security personnel, porous library security and lack of knowledge of the enormity of library offences in that order were the circumstantial causes of abnormal behaviours amongst undergraduate users in academic libraries in the Niger Delta Area, Nigeria. These findings support Clarke's (1980) SCP Theory which states that the perceived net benefits of a crime are what ultimately influence a potential criminal's decision to do it, and this decision is influenced by the existence or lack of different behavioral justifications.

Also, on the most common abnormal behavior, the study found amongst others that pilfering and mutilation are the most common. These results are consistent with those of Akinola (2020), Ubogu (2019) and Isebe (2015), who listed theft and mutilation, vandalism, destruction, and disaster as the main security concerns in libraries. According to the reports, deviant behavior by graduate students hinders the expansion of libraries sustainably, damages library resources, irritates staff members, and damages the reputation of the institution.

Furthermore, analysis of perceived consequences of abnormal/deviant behaviour showed that users' learning and research capacity are limited by the aberrant behavior of undergraduate students, which therefore indirectly costs the taxpayers. They lessen the number of services a library can provide, lower the caliber of its materials and services, widen the educational gap, deter patronage, and lower the value that patrons place on library services (Isebe, 2015). The results of this investigation corroborate Clarke's SCP Theory, which postulates that perceived benefits, perceived costs, and the extent to which offenders rationalize their actions all influence the likelihood of crime (Clarke, 1980). The benefit is most often the outcome of the act, but the perceived cost is the anticipated input or price to be paid for committing a crime.

Finally, on mitigating abnormal/deviant behavior, the study discovered that all the items listed for investigation were acknowledged as ways to reduce abnormal behaviour. The findings also agree with Clarke (1980), who noted that libraries/institutions must make it harder for criminals to commit crimes by raising the perceived effort involved; and raising the perceived risk (probability) of being caught by enhancing the security architecture of the library in order to increase perceived costs and decrease the incidence of crime. The prevalence of deviant behaviors among undergraduate students in academic libraries can be reduced by employing CCTV cameras to monitor activities in the library, assigning enough staff to monitor activities in the reading room, which lacks CCTV cameras, and setting up a common area where students can meet, make phone calls, and potentially hold discussion group (Awujoola, & Olapade, 2015).

Conclusion

Despite the fact that aberrant behavior is a necessary component of healthy, societies, research has shown that it is detrimental to the expansion and smooth operation of libraries and should be

avoided or reduced. According to the notion of situational crime prevention, situational circumstances not only directly hinder criminal activity by reducing opportunities, but they also have a significant impact on how offenders perceive costs and advantages, which in turn shape their behavior. This study has confirmed that before committing crimes, those who commit library crimes base their decisions on perceived costs and net benefits in a pseudo-rational manner. When crime prevention measures are implemented, it becomes more difficult for criminals to carry out their crimes and increases the likelihood that they will be detected, hence reducing crime.

Recommendations

Even though it might be challenging to stop deviant behavior in the university library, it is possible to manage it to some level if libraries can boost efforts to combat crime and lessen its benefits by doing the following:

Tagging library materials with Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tags.

- ❖ Tagging library materials with Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tags.
- ❖ Imposing harsher sanctions for violators within the library.
- ❖ hiring more porters and security guards for libraries.
- ❖ assigning enough workers to keep an eye on things in the reading rooms without CCTV.
- ❖ establishing a common area where students can communicate and potentially hold a discussion group; and
- ❖ establishing a student disciplinary committee to investigate instances of students breaking library policies.

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