

Exploring Library Security and User Perceptions: A Case Study of the University of Business and Integrated Development Studies (UBIDS)

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Abstract

The study examined library security and user perceptions in the academic library of the University of Business and Integrated Development Studies (UBIDS). This study aims to explore the security challenges in academic libraries from the perspectives of users. The descriptive survey design was employed. Questionnaires were used to elicit responses from 142 users from the Bamahu campus, the Law school campus, and the old campus/36-unit block of the university who patronized the academic library. The study revealed that more students used the library in the first semester of the first year. The study also found that 56.72 percent of the respondents alluded to the presence of security challenges in the library such as the library staff making loud phone calls in the library. Similarly, the findings of the study showed that the limited number of library materials, the lack of security in the library, selfishness, and lack of awareness of library rules, regulations, and sanctions among others contributed to the security challenges in the library. The findings also indicate that certain library staff themselves violate library rules, setting a poor example for users. Respondents expressed discomfort with the security rules, revealing a negative view of library security. As a result, the study suggests organizing regular user orientation programs to educate users about the consequences of unacceptable behaviour in the library.

Keywords: Library Security, User Perceptions, Theft and Mutilation, Library Materials, UBIDS, Ghana.

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1. Introduction

The academic library is a repository of knowledge. It provides an avenue that enhances literacy, learning, and research by giving students and faculty unhindered access to essential information resources. The users of academic libraries are mostly students and faculty members (Simmonds & Andaleeb, 2001). The library is the information centre of any effective educational system and the foundation upon which other academic activities are constructed. Thus, the calibre of library services delivered in a university could be used as a viable yardstick to measure the standard of that university (Igbinovia & Ishola, 2023). A library has a variety of collections that have been created to satisfy the information demands of users. It plays a crucial role in bringing library materials, library users and librarians together (Nicholas & White, 2012).

Since the library is the warehouse of vital resources for both human and national development, its security is of utmost importance. Therefore, best practices must be implemented to guarantee proper security and protection of library collections for them to fulfil their intended purpose. This is to ensure that library resources will not be stolen or destroyed (Gupta & Madhusudhan, 2017). Library security involves the efficient methods employed by librarians to conserve and preserve library materials. It encompasses the measures put in place to enhance a safe environment for librarians, library materials and library users (Nath & Deka, 2020). A library's resources are the knowledge-bearing materials that allow it to achieve its mandate of satisfying the information demands of library users. Many libraries frequently lose important materials due to insufficient security protocols and the unscrupulous behaviours of some users.

The consequences of losing a library resource are dire since the library may not have another in stock or the ability to replace it. This goes a long way to deprive and deny other users the satisfaction of accessing that information (Ansari et al., 2021). Hence, librarians must devise effective strategies that will curb the destruction or abuse of the resources in the library. In the same vein, library users should also be protected from disruptive behaviors such as noisemaking and stealing of personal belongings by library staff or other users (Bakare et al., 2021). In as much as librarians are mostly at the receiving end of assault from users, it is also expedient to

control the actions of librarians that will discourage users from patronizing library services. This is because, without users, libraries will become useless and they will not fulfil the purpose for which they were established.

Library security is a recurrent challenge that is experienced in almost all libraries in the world including the libraries at UBIDS. The factors that pose a threat to library materials could include the attitudinal problems of users and librarians, and administrative and architectural problems which will require stringent measures to nip them in the bud (Akor, 2012). Academic libraries deal with security challenges such as book theft and mutilation, misplacement and concealment of books from other users, damaging library property, etc. Some users also intentionally mis-shelve books to prevent other users from accessing or borrowing them (Olajide, 2017). These aforementioned library security breaches continue to occur despite the sanctions many libraries have put in place. This therefore begs the question of whether library users are adequately abreast with the sanctions that will be meted out to them if found breaching a library rule. There is however a paucity of literature from the perspective of users in this regard (Pradhan & Bhoi, 2015; Saikia, 2023). It is in this light that the study seeks to explore the library security challenges at the UBIDS from the perspectives of users. The findings of the study will help library staff and authorities to know the role users' awareness of library sanctions plays in curbing security challenges in the library.

2. Literature review

Libraries have made peace with the fact that library security challenges will not go away anytime soon. This growing concern of insecurity in libraries comes at a cost and it is disruptive to both librarians and users. Theft and mutilations of library materials are not the inventions of this present generation but have been in existence for a very long time (Constantinou, 1995). According to Constantinou (1995), these phenomena had already taken place since 539 BC when the Persians conquered Egypt, entered the library of Rameses II, and mutilated rolls of papyri. Similarly, Anthony who was the emperor of Rome, plundered the library of Pergamon in 41 BC and bequeathed all its resources to Cleopatra. More so, in 642 BC, soldiers of the Prophet, evaded and made waste of the Alexandrian library (Maidabino, 2012).

Mast (1984) posited that the inclinations of library users to perform library infractions could be connected to situational, psychological, and sociological factors. Hendrick & Murfin (1974) using a student population of 168 at Kent State University, found that 14 students, representing 8.3 percent, admitted to mutilating library materials. However, these findings did not reveal any appreciable variations between the attitudes of students who mutilated books and those who did not. Subsequently, Murfin & Hendrick (1975) conducted another research to find out the motivations of mutilators. They interviewed three serial mutilators of library books. They found that their unethical actions were largely motivated by their animosity toward the library. They had an inherent aversion towards the library. The interviewees however admitted that, when they became abreast with how challenging and expensive it was to replace book pages, their attitudes toward tearing pages of books changed for the better. Weiss (1981) on the other hand posited that, theft and mutilation of library resources by students are more sociological and psychological than attitudinal. That is, the environment where students live, as well as the academic pressures experienced, could be strong motivations for students to purposely mis-shelve or hide books so that when they return, they could easily locate them. Petersen (1990) however argued that situational reasons could make students tear or steal library materials.

Onifade et al. (2010) conducted a survey using 500 randomly selected university students to solicit their perceptions and reasons for vandalising library property. The analysis of their responses revealed that 48.6% of respondents strongly agreed that vandalism in libraries is unavoidable. They made this assertion based on the fact that, library collections are insufficient, recommended textbooks are in limited quantities and also expensive to buy etc. However, 13.4% strongly disagreed with this. Their responses suggested that many students have a negative perception of the mutilation and theft of library materials. According to Akor (2012), users of academic libraries engage in the theft and mutilation of library resources due to academic pressure, financial hardship, and sheer selfishness. Olajide (2017) also found that because the library books were insufficient, students stole these books to keep them as their property. The students had the nerve to frequently engage in these acts since they could easily outmanoeuvre the porous security systems in place at this university.

Also, disruptive behaviours of users could be a result of insufficient security measures. The findings of a survey conducted by Amoah (2016) on 223 users of the Sam Jonah Library of the University of Cape Coast showed that, in the absence of sufficient library security, 62.33% of respondents strongly agree that harassment by library staff could occur, 71.30% strongly agreed that library property could be stolen and 60.54% also strongly agreed to the occurrence of disruptive situations like phone calls. This university faces a budding security challenge since 90.13% of the respondents disagreed with the knowledge of a mechanism that inspects ID before entry, and 67.71% strongly disagreed that the library allows only authorised users. The visibility of library security could

deter potential disruptive behaviours by students. However, this was not the case since 27.35% strongly disagreed with the presence of well-trained security personnel at the entrance of the library. Many a time, the focus of security in the library is to protect library materials and library staff without giving thought to the safety of library users. This study also revealed that, 71.30% and 77.13% of the respondents were harassed by library staff and were disturbed by nuisance phone calls respectively in the library. 43.95% of the respondents had their personal belongings stolen in the library. Also, 14.79% and 2.24% of the respondents were verbally and sexually abused respectively in the library.

Ajayi & Omotayo (2004) conducted a survey using 556 students to explore their perceptions concerning library security. Their findings revealed that the commonest method employed to steal library materials was to hide them in clothing and leave the library during rush hours when the librarian was busy and overwhelmed with exiting users. According to the respondents, about seventy-six percent of stealing of library materials are done by erasing library identification symbols from the materials. Another way was to interchange the slips of previously loaned books with yet to be stolen books. These same authors found that, students engaged in these aforementioned activities due to their insensitivity to the plight of other users who will be denied access to the information in the stolen books, their ignorance of the exorbitant prices of textbooks, and the thrill of outwitting librarians (Ajayi & Omotayo, 2004). However, Maidabino (2012) asserted that, academic pressures rather than the malicious intent of students and the ignorance of replacement costs are the contributing factors to theft and vandalism of library materials. More so, when Sarasvathy (2016) surveyed to find out what gave students the impetus for theft of books and other security breaches in libraries, 78.34% of respondents attributed it to the small number of times they are allowed to borrow books and 58.65% of respondents attributed it to insufficient library hours.

Also, 66.71% and 70.02% of the respondents attributed this malpractice to the paucity of photocopiers in the library and the high cost of photocopying materials in the library respectively.

Many academic institutions do not orient their students on the use of library services. Even though, ignorance of the library security protocols is not an excuse to engage in such malpractices, some students argue that lack of orientation is a major contributing factor to the security challenges in the library since students may not know what constitutes a breach of the library code or policy. Wadasinghe & Dilhani (2023) conducting research using 523 postgraduate medical trainees found that 71.89% and 28.11% of respondents found the library user education programme very useful and useful respectively. The results of a study conducted by Punchihewa et al. (2016) revealed that 89% of the respondents who engaged in the library orientation and tour programme gained considerable knowledge on the effective use of library services and resources. Ayoung et al. (2014) found that providing users with the opportunity for orientation on the usage of library services will augur well to curb security breaches in the library. This is because, orientations create awareness of what constitutes a library illegality. Furthermore, according to Isebe (2015), library user orientations should be done frequently.

3. Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive survey design to gather information from the library users of the University of Business and Integrated Development Studies (UBIDS). This method is deemed ideal due to its flexibility which enables the use of several data collection approaches like questionnaires, interviews, and observation. This study used the questionnaire as the method for data collection. The questionnaire involved both the open ended and closed ended questions to elicit responses on the perceptions of library patrons concerning library security. Of the 150 questionnaires that were distributed, 145 questionnaires were returned. However, the analysis of this study was done using the responses of 142 respondents which were useable. The data obtained were analysed using simple percentages and frequencies.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Background characteristics of respondents

Out of the 142 respondents, 135 (95.07 percent) were library users at the Bamahu Campus, 3 (2.11 percent) were library users at the Law School and 4 (2.82 percent) were users at the Old Campus/36-unit block of the University of Business and Integrated Development Studies. (See Table 1). A total of 109 (76.76 percent) male and 33 (23.24 percent) female library users responded to the questions (See Table 2). This shows that, most of the library users in this study are males.

Table 1. Campus of Respondents

Campus	Frequency	Percentage
Bamahu	135	95.07
Law school	3	2.11
Old campus/36-unit block	4	2.82
Total	142	100.00

Source: Field data, 2023

Table 2. Gender of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	33	23.24
Male	109	76.76
Total	142	100.00

Source: Field data, 2023

The respondents were asked when they began using the library. This was to ensure that the respondents were library users and were familiar with the library environment. 79 (57.25 percent) representing a majority of the respondents stated that they frequented the library since the first semester of the first year. 27 (19.57 percent) started using the library in the second semester of the first year. 8 (5.80 percent) also used the library both in the first and second semesters of the sophomore year. 16 (11.59 percent) started using the library after the second year (See Table 3). Most of the respondents (76.82 percent) started using the library resources in the first year. The library is a hub of knowledge and a place to seek information. Students in their nascent years readily patronize the library as compared to students in other years. Thus, the library is mostly used by novices or new students at the university who cannot find their way into the library. These respondents have spent just a few months on campus and will not be familiar with the library system on campus. Therefore, these first years are likely to engage in unacceptable behaviours unawares which could pose a security challenge to both library materials and other users, since they are new users of the library.

Table 3. When respondents began using the library

when started using the library	Frequency	Percentage
First semester of my first year	79	57.25
First semester of my second year	8	5.80
Second semester of my first year	27	19.57
Second semester of my second year	8	5.80
Other	16	11.59
Total	138	100.00

Source: Field data, 2023

4.2. Security challenges and awareness of rules and regulations in the library

As part of the questionnaire, the respondents were asked some pertinent questions to get their perceptions on library security and library services rendered in the university (See Table 4).

Table 4. Views of respondents on library security

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Security as a challenge in the library	76	56.72
Receipt of formal library orientation	67	49.63
Receiving brochure which contains library rules and regulations	39	29.10
Clear display of library rules and regulations	111	82.84
Awareness of the sanctions against unacceptable behaviours	33	25

Source: Field data, 2023

From Table 4, 56.72 percent of the respondents think that security is a challenge in the libraries of UBIDS. This shows that the academic library of UBIDS is also experiencing security challenges just as other libraries, and this

is consistent with the findings of Amoah (2016). The large number of fresh students that use the library requires frequent orientations to keep them abreast with the rules and regulations of the library environment. However, the results show that a paltry 49.63 percent of the respondents went through formal orientation and 29.10 percent of the respondents were given a brochure that contained library rules and regulations. This suggests the paucity of library education programs organised by the university which will inevitably lead to security challenges in the library. Therefore, one could deduce that the security challenges happening in the academic library of the university could be because of ignorance. Nonetheless, 82.84 percent of the respondents saw that the rules and regulations of the library were visibly displayed in the library. Furthermore, only 33 (25 percent) of the respondents were aware of the sanctions meted out to recalcitrant library users. Since displaying the rules and regulations of the library was important, it is also expedient that flouters of the rules be made to know the punitive measures that will be meted out to them. Making the users know the sanctions that await them if they break any library regulation is also expedient. This is because when library users are aware of these sanctions, it could deter them from engaging in such unacceptable behaviours in the library. This will go a long way to reduce or even stop the prevalent security breaches in academic libraries.

4.3. Uncomfortable library rules and regulations

The study further solicited responses from the respondents about the rules and regulations displayed in the library that they did not like. The findings are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Responses to uncomfortable library rules and regulations

Rules and Regulations	Number	Percentage
Not allowing water in the library	36	28.80
The library is not liable for users missing items	37	29.60
Borrowing a book with an ID card	21	16.80
The library shuts on public holidays	36	28.80
No discussion in the library	22	17.60
The library prohibits phone calls	14	11.20
Patrons are responsible for any damages caused to library resources	8	6.40
Only registered users allowed to borrow library material	14	11.20
Some library collections are not loanable	4	3.20
Only properly issued books are allowed outside the library	5	4.00
Late return of borrowed books attracting a penalty	7	5.60
Users are to pay the replacement cost of damaged library materials	8	6.40
Users held responsible for missing materials in their custody	6	4.80
Users are expected to behave and present themselves decently at all times	3	2.40
No reservation of seat for a colleague.	15	12.00

Source: Field data, 2023

From Table 5, 29.60 percent of the respondents were not comfortable with the rule that the library is not liable for the missing items of users. Library users are not allowed to enter the reading area of the library with their personal belongings. Users usually keep their items usually at the waiting area under the watchful eye of the security personnel of the library. Thus, students become uncomfortable with this rule especially when their items go missing due to a lapse in the library security. Similarly, 28.80 percent of the respondents did not like the rule that water is not allowed in the library as well as the rule that the library does not operate on public holidays. This follows after the fact that; the library is the hub of knowledge, and it must be accessible even on public holidays. Furthermore, 17.60 percent of the respondents did not like the rule that prohibited discussions in the library. Also, 16.80 percent were not comfortable with the regulation that made the ID card a mandatory requirement for the borrowing of a library book. The ID card of a student could be misplaced or stolen. Therefore, the student will not be able to borrow library books. This could motivate the student to steal or mutilate the library material that could not be borrowed for want of an ID card. 11.20 percent of the students did not like the rule that only users registered with the library would be allowed to borrow library materials. This same aforementioned percentage of users were also not happy about the rule that phone calls were not permitted in the library. The above reveals the perspective of the respondents to the rules of the library which goes a long

way to suggest the security challenges that would have been regularly occurring in the library but for the rules and regulations. The rules and regulations put in place in the library are to curb the security challenges in the library and protect library staff, materials, and users. However, the respondents' aversion to the rules and regulations of the library points to the fact that, most of these library users are potential threats to library security who are only waiting for a lapse in the security system to engage in an untoward act in the library. These respondents will flout the rules of the library at the least opportunity and thus contribute to the security challenges in the library.

4.4. Rules flouted by the library staff

The respondents were asked about the rules and regulations that they perceived the library staff often break in the library. The findings are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Rules flouted by library staff.

Flouted rules	Frequency	Percentage
Loud communication among staff in the library	56	53.82
Talking loudly on the phone	53	50
Staff talking rudely to users	24	26.24
Tipsy during work hours	5	4.72
Others	10	9.43

Source: Field data, 2023

From Table 6, it could be seen that, 56 (53.82 percent) of the respondents reported that the library staff engaged in loud communication among themselves in the library which disturbs the serenity of the library. 53 (50 percent) of the respondents reported that the library staff did not only receive phone calls in the library, but they also spoke loudly during phone calls thereby distracting users of the library. The library is supposed to be a serene place where users search, study, and glean knowledge. The library staff is therefore tasked to ensure the library environment remains conducive enough to fulfil its intended purpose. Therefore, disruptive library staff become serious security challenges in the library which must be dealt with. This is because if library users also begin to behave likewise, the security breaches in the library will exacerbate and the library will not be a habitable place to gain information. Similarly, 24 (26.24 percent) and 10 (9.43 percent) of the respondents indicated that, the library staff talked rudely to users and flouted other rules of the library respectively. These could discourage library users from patronizing the library and it will lead to the underutilisation of the library resources. Some of the respondents (4.72 percent) observed that library staff were tipsy during work hours. This certainly contravenes the code and conducts guiding the service delivery of librarians and thus confirms the findings of Holt (2007) that, the library staff could also be a security challenge in the library.

4.5. Motivations for unacceptable behaviours in the library

Library users often engage in unethical behaviours that pose a security challenge to the library environment. The study therefore explored the reasons why users took part in such security-threatening behaviours in the library. The respondents were asked about their motivations for practicing unacceptable behaviours in the library. The results are shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Results on why students engaged in unacceptable behaviours in the library

Motivations for unacceptable behaviour	Frequency	Percentage
Limited resources in the library	60	44.44
Selfish interest	23	17.04
Ignorance	57	42.22
Lack of reprographic facilities in the library	14	10.37
Lack of security in the library	21	15.56
Needed space for group discussion	51	37.78
Lack of awareness of library rules and regulations	37	27.41
Lack of awareness of library sanctions	17	12.59

Source: Field data, 2023

From Table 7, the findings indicate that 60 (44.44 percent) of the respondents believe that students engage in unacceptable behaviour in the library due to the limited library resources. Many a time, the academic resources in the library are not commensurate with the number of library users who may need them at a time. However, the financial constraints of some students also do not permit them to purchase their copies. Therefore, they depend

solely on the library for these materials. Students experience academic pressures, especially during examination periods, and would like to have unrestricted access to library resources that are in insufficient quantities. Thus, these students are likely to engage in unacceptable behaviours such as intentionally mis-shelving or stealing the library material in some cases. This agrees with the findings of Onifade et al. (2010). Similarly, fifty-one respondents were of the view that the unavailability of the space needed for group discussions could motivate students to act in unethical ways in the library. Large spaces for discussions in the library enable library users to effectively use library materials for their discussions in the library. However, without this opportunity, coupled with other factors such as limited library materials (books) and stringent borrowing procedures, students could be motivated to steal or mutilate library materials, which could not be borrowed, for their discussions elsewhere.

Also, 42.22 percent of the respondents believed that ignorance causes students to engage in unacceptable behaviours in the library. The ignorance of users could involve their unawareness of the cost of their unacceptable behaviour to other library users or the replacement of stolen library material. Sensitizing problem users about the cost of their unacceptable behaviours could effectively discourage them from engaging in such behaviours. The findings of Murfin & Hendrick (1975) suggest that, serial mutilators of library materials refrained from the act when they became abreast with the cost involved in replacing the mutilated library materials. Similarly, the ignorance of users could also be concerning the rules and regulations of the library. Even though ignorance of the library rules is not an excuse to engage in unethical behaviours in the library, in the absence of orientation programs that raise awareness concerning the regulations of the library, these library infractions are likely to abound. This buttresses the results where 27.41 percent and 12.59 percent of the respondents hold the view that, the lack of awareness of library rules and the lack of awareness of sanctions respectively contributed to the students' unacceptable behaviours in the library.

Furthermore, 15.56 percent of the respondents stated that the lack of security in the library was responsible for the illegal behaviours displayed in the library by some users. When library users discover a loophole in the security measures put in place at the library, they tend to exploit this weakness in the security system unabated. This goes to suggest that the security system of the library is so porous that, problem patrons engage in security breaches with impunity. This agrees with the findings of Pradhan & Bhoi (2015) that in the presence of a porous library security system, users will engage in mutilation and theft of library materials undetected. More so, another perspective of some respondents towards unacceptable behaviours in the library was revealed when the findings showed that 17.04 percent of uncouth behaviours in the library could be attributed to the selfishness of some users. This is also in line with the findings of Akor (2012) that, some users engage in unacceptable behaviours such as theft of library materials just to deny others access to those materials.

5. Conclusion

The study found that the academic library of the University of Business and Integrated Development Studies experienced some security challenges. The study revealed the users' reasons for the unacceptable behaviours displayed in the library which was a security threat to library staff, library materials, and other library users. Similarly, some of the library staff who are expected to protect library materials and users flouted library rules unreservedly. The study therefore showed that not only users but also library staff could be a security challenge in the library. Finally, the study revealed the perspectives of the library users of UBIDS. In that sense, even though the respondents alluded to the problem of security in the library, most of the respondents were uncomfortable with the rules and regulations enacted to curb the security challenges in the library (See Table 5). In effect, these respondents are themselves security threats to the library but are unaware due to the lack of orientation on the use of the library. The library users have some negative perspectives of the library security system which if not checked will not augur well for the smooth operation of library services in the university.

The study therefore recommends that, a robust security system should be put in place in the library to check the activities of both library staff and users. Also, while provisions are made to stock the library shelves with sufficient recommended textbooks and other materials to meet the ever-increasing demand of students, photocopier services should be provided for students in the library at no or low cost. This will enable these students to duplicate copies of information they need thus preventing mutilation and theft of library materials. Furthermore, library user orientations should be regularly organised to create awareness of the rules, regulations, and sanctions of the library. Finally, in-service training should be frequently organised for the library staff to make them more security conscious and bring them up to speed with the modern library service delivery methods.

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