SECURITY OF STAFF IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES: A STUDY OF SAM JONAH LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

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Abstract

This study examines staff security in Sam Jonah Library and investigates the security breach experience of staff as well as identifies the measures put in place to ensure staff security in the library. The research methodology used is the descriptive survey design which used both interview and questionnaires to solicit information from respondents. The census sampling technique was used where all the units in the population formed part of the study. Results indicate that security breach that staff are exposed to include; property theft, verbal abuse from user, encounters with riff raffs and fear during night shift due to the absence of adequate security personnel. Further, findings indicate the absence of a security policy for the library. Again, inadequate measures are put in place to ensure staff security in the library. This study then recommends access control to the library, installation of closed circuit television cameras and promulgation of a security policy by the library that would formalize courses of action.

Keywords: Staff security, Academic libraries, Sam Jonah Library

Introduction

Libraries play a significant role in national development through the information they provide to their patrons. Owing to this, libraries over the years have been rightly perceived as one of the strong pillars of world development and as such progress in every country is dependent on the quality of information that libraries provide (Ebunuwele, Yaya &Krubu, 2011). Recently, so much relevance has been placed on libraries by organizations all over the world to the extent that most of these organizations establish libraries in order to keep as well as provide records or information relevant to their core duties. In light of this added importance in contemporary times, libraries must be very conducive for study and research and free from safety threats (Maidabino, 2010). Libraries must be proactive by paying attention to insignificant infractions in order to prevent them from escalating into significant ones. No matter how challenging it may be, libraries need to create a safe and secure library environment for library materials, patrons as well as staff (Bell, 2012).

Bell (2012) further indicates that security and safety issues that occur in libraries ranges from mutilation, theft, sexual harassment and delinquent behavior from mentally challenged patrons. Further, Bell advocates that it is the responsibility of library management to adopt effective strategies in dealing with these safety issues so as to make the library secure and safe for users and staff. Additionally in the view of Dixon (2016), safety of patrons and staff should be the priority of all types of libraries, as such proper systems including security policies should be developed to deal with the challenges that may arise as a result of these security breaches.

Al-Tuwaijri (2008) opines that safety measures are to be laid down in all institutions to ensure that all individuals who contribute to the development of the economy are given maximum protection from health and security threats. Since the contribution of human capital to the development and running of libraries cannot be overemphasised, Al-Tuwaijri's submission should be given the utmost attention in libraries (Senyah&Lamptey, 2011). The safety of library staff should be of maximum importance to library management as library materials. This is necessary because, Shuman (2002) has indicated that people avoid places where they do not feel safe, especially for the fear of being injured or physically mugged. Senyah and Lamptey (2008) further stressed that, since there has been an upsurge of crime in all campuses of universities, the security and safety of staff of libraries is very key, especially with those libraries that provide late night services for their clients.

In a study conducted by Raffensperger (2010), it was indicated that academic libraries found in urban centers stand a high risk of crime than those found in rural areas. These crimes may range from property destruction to more violent crimes against users and staff. Raffensperger (2010) further indicates that risk assessment in libraries should therefore be comprehensive enough to include personal safety and security. Recently constructed academic libraries put several measures in place to ensure the safety of occupants. These measures may include; adequate ventilation, enough lighting and plainness of the library building (Dowlin, 2004). Akor (2013) further stressed that library environment should always be secured for collections, patrons as well as library staff.

Statement of the problem

In this era of arson, terrorism and many other human-incited disasters, the importance of safety and security in organisations and public spaces such as libraries cannot be over-emphasised. A deliberate perusal of the literature regarding safety and security issues in academic libraries reveals a gap manifested by limited research on the safety and security of library staff in academic libraries. Most literature emphasize the safety and security of library materials and information resources with the objective of prolonging the lives of these information resources. Some of such research include**;** Broadhead, 2002; Momodu, 2002; Shashid, 2005; Holt, 2007; Ebunuwele, Yaya &Krubu, 2011 and Osayande, 2011.

In a study conducted by Akor (2012) it was indicated that the primary goal of every security system in the library should target library materials, patrons as well as library staff. It is therefore important for library management to provide a safe and secured environment for library staff because the library cannot survive without staff.The security and safety of staff in the Sam Jonah Library however is seemingly relegated to the background and taken for granted. Attention should be placed on the security of the library staff, especially during extended library services (where the library closes at 10pm in the course of the semester and 5am during examinations). It is therefore not out of place to find out the measures that are put in place to ensure the security of staff of the library. Moreover, no research on the security of staff has been conducted in the Sam Jonah Library and as such this study seeks to plug that gap.

Objectives of the study

1. Identify the security risks that Sam Jonah Librarystaff are exposed to

2. Identify the security breaches experienced by staff.

3. Find out the availability of a staff security policy.

4. Investigate the measures put in place to ensure the security of staff in the library.

5. Make recommendations based on findings.

Literature review

Individuals or organisations (including libraries) that provide public services are exposed to all kinds of risk or violence. In the course of meeting the goals of every library, the welfare and safety of staff should not be taken for granted (McGrath, 1995). This is due to the fact that there has been increasing concern on issues bordering on harassment, violence from customers and aggressive behaviours that staff encounter during their working hours. Members of staff who experience any of such problems or security breaches are not able to perform their duties effectively and also lead to absenteeism (McGrath, 1995). Employees need to be protected because employers invest substantially in them through training to equip them with the needed skills to perform effectively.

Farrugia (2002) is of the opinion that violence and the perpetration of criminal acts though associated with professions like policing, taxi driving and other high risk occupations, they are not limited to only these professions. The author draws attention to the fact that the general public does not view librarianship as a profession that is risky and susceptible to acts of aggression from patrons, colleagues and extremists. Indeed it can be argued that the carefree outlook of many academic libraries and their inherent ability to attract sizeable numbers in terms of patrons make them extremely attractive to persons with malicious intentions like terrorists and

extremists. Further, in managing the security lapses, the emphasis of management of academic libraries has been on the preservation of information resources and not necessarily on personal security and safety in libraries. This is emphasised by Chancy and McDougall (1992) who stated that personal security, safety, crime and violence prevention in libraries have received very little attention as a result of the dearth of literature available on the issue. The literature is indeed replete with many incidences or acts of violence and aggression against librarians whilst at work.

In the view of Adewuyi and Adekanye (2011) criminal incidences in libraries includes theft and mutilation of library materials, theft of individual properties of both staff and users and violent attacks on library employees. Similarly, Abioye and Rasaki (2013) outlines harassment, verbal and physical assault of library staff, arson, theft of both personal belongings and library materials, and vandalism of library collections including equipment. It becomes therefore imperative for libraries to document and implement measures to curb all these situations in the library. Academic libraries and librarians all over the world require serene environments devoid of security and safety incidences to effectively carry out their mandates. This might be the ultimate and ideal scenario, however the situation in most academic libraries in Africa is far from ideal.

Abioye and Rasaki (2013) indicate that due to insufficient funding of academic libraries in Africa, African libraries are exposed to crimes. This was explained by the fact that, the insufficient funding makes it difficult for libraries to implement stringent measures to secure the library's collection;it's users as well as staff. However, McDonald (1992) as cited in Abioye and

Rasaki (2013) opines that absolute security is unfeasible in service organisations. He further suggested that since crimes cannot be totally exterminated, prevention must be focused on through operative security and legal precincts. In suggesting measures to curb crimes in the library, Ewing (1994) outlines among others that closed circuit television cameras and adequately costumed security personnel to patrol all floors of the library should be implemented.

Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive survey design. Two main instruments were used to collect data from respondents; the questionnaire and interview guide. The entire staff of the Sam Jonah Library totaling one hundred and ninety six (196) constituted the population for the study.The study used the census sampling technique where all staff were used for the study. Out of the 196 questionnairesadministered, 181 were retrieved representing a response rate of92.35%. The questionnaire was made up of both open and closed ended questions and formulated according to the objectives set out for the study. A semi structured interview guide was also used to solicit responses from library management.This was basically done to find out the measures as well as the policies put in place to protect staff from security threats.

Simple frequencies and percentage distribution tables and charts were used to analyze the questionnaires through the use of Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) version 22. Responses from the interview were thematically analyzed after transcription.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

1.2 Security breach that staff are exposed to

It was essential for the researchers to identify the breaches that staff are exposed to in the course of executing their activities. Responses are shown on table 1

Table 1: Security breach exposure of staff

Variable	Frequency and percentage					
	SD n(%)	D n(%)	N n(%)	A n(%)	SA n(%)	Rank
Property theft (laptops, phones etc)	9(4.97)	30(16.58)	11(6.08)	65(35.91)	66(36.46)	3.93
Physical abuse from users	70(38.67)	75(41.44)	21(11.60)	10(5.53)	5(2.76)	4.22
Harassment by users	8(4.42)	78(43.10)	6(3.31)	69(38.12)	20(11.05)	4.13
Encounters with unstable visitors and riffraff	4(2.21)	72(39.78)	12(6.63)	83(45.86)	10(5.52)	4.22
Contact with dangerous weapons and materials in the library	32(17.68)	97(53.59)	32(17.68)	15(8.29)	5(2.76)	4.39
Verbal abuse from users	5(2.76)	44(24.31)	18(9.95)	64(35.36)	50(27.62)	3.80
Unsolicited sexual harassment	56(30.94)	58(32.04)	56(30.94)	5(2.76)	6(3.32)	4.23

Source: field data, 2017

Security breach experience of staff

It was imperative for the researchers to find out the breach experienced by staff in terms of security. It is to be noted that respondents were given the opportunity to indicate by writing the security breach they have experienced in the library. Some staff indicated more than one and others too had not experienced any breach at all. Responses are shown on table 2.

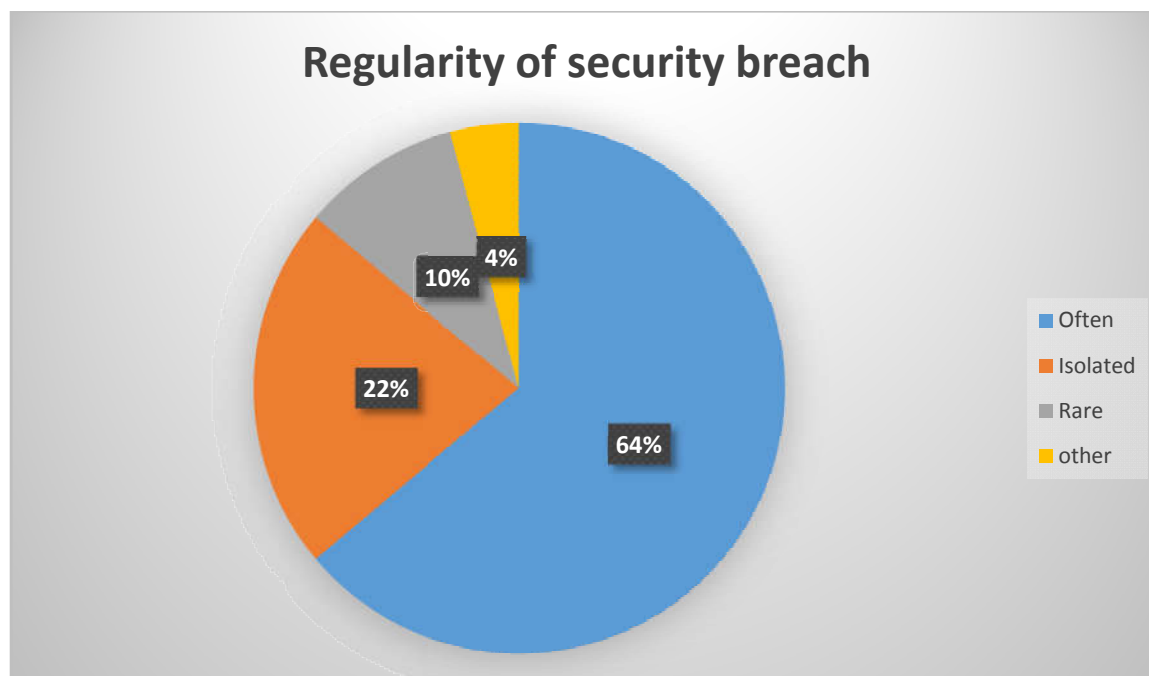Table 2: Security breach experienced by staff

Security breach	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Property theft	79	40.72
Verbal abuse	111	57.22
Encounters with riff raffs	37	19.07
Fear during night shift	59	30.41
Intimidation by users(students)	19	9.79

Source: field data, 2017

1.2.1 Regularity of security breach experience

It was also deemed necessary to find out how often staff experienced the above mentioned breaches. Responses are shown on the figure 1.

Figure 1: Regularity of security breach

Regularity of security breach

Legend: Often, Isolated, Rare, other

64% — 22% — 10% — 4%

Source: Field data, 2017

Section prone to security threat in the library

In a quest to find out the section which is most prone to security threat in the library, analyses revealed that one hundred and sixty eight respondents representing 92.82% indicated that the reference/ clients service section is the section highly prone to security breach. It was explained that since the reference section is the first point of call of every user in the library, staff in this section are particularly exposed to security threats.

Availability of a security policy

Laying down policies is crucial in all aspects of work, this is because a policy is a blueprint that is used as a guiding principle towards the achievement of a set goal. It was therefore relevant to find out whether, the library had a laid down policy to safeguard the safety and security of staff

or not. Interviews revealed the absence of a laid down policy on security of either staff or patrons in the library. It was further revealed that security personnel who came around during working hours were not permanently postedto the library but rather were meant to patrol an area of which the premises of the library forms part. Also, only one security personnel was assigned to the premises taking charge of several places at the same time. The absence of a policy on security is a clear indicationof how much attention has been placed on security in the library. This is in stark contrast with the assertion of Grewal (2004) and Brown (2007), who suggested that libraries all over the world should lay down procedures to secure the safety of the library. These documented policies according to Brown (2007) should be integrated, in that, all security concerns in the library must be brought together in a comprehensive document with their laid down solutions and preventive measures.
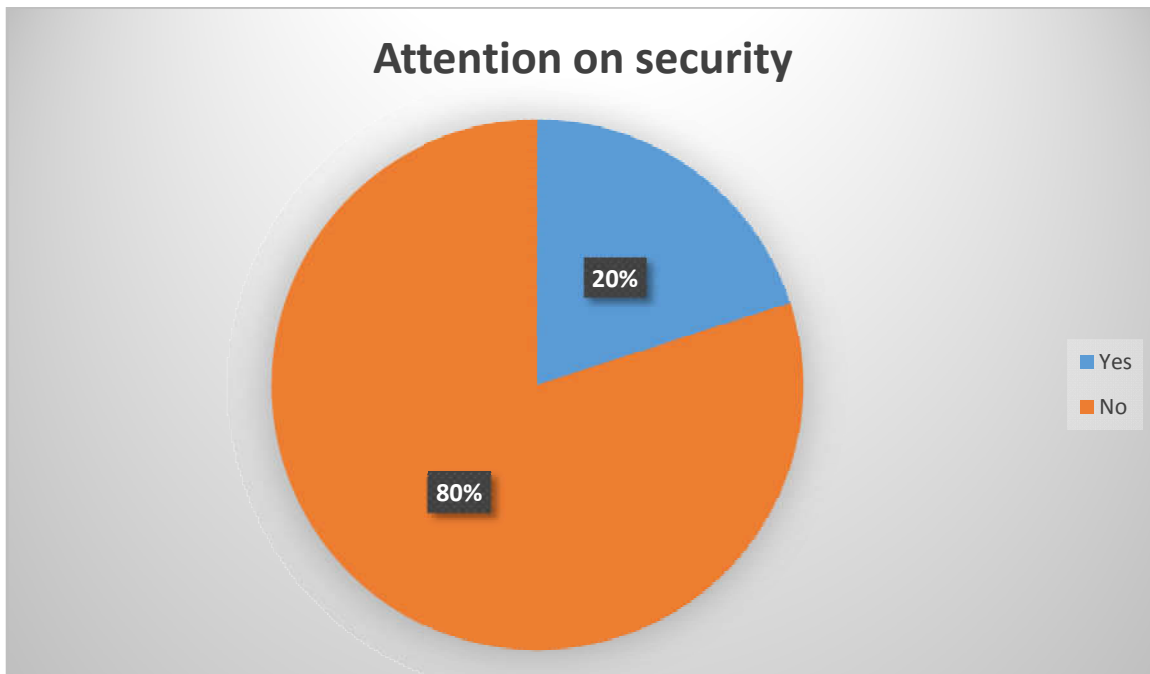
Measures put in place to ensure staff security

Security of staff is very essential to the progress of libraries, for this reason adequate measures are required to be instituted to ensure that members ofstaff are protected from all forms of threats emanating from all angles. It was of great importance for the researchers to find out the measures that the library has put in place to ensure the security of staff in the library.Analyses indicated that majority of staff (81.88%) did not know of any measure put in place by the library to ensure the safety of staff of the library. However, it was indicated by some respondents(51%) that the library has made available the phone numbers of security personnel for them to be contacted in case of crimes and anything that infringes on the security of staff. Further, during extended library hours, a bus is provided to convey staff to their various destinations to prevent

any form of mishaps on their way home. Additionally,much as security personnel are not specifically positioned at the entrance or exit of the library during the night shift, their mere presence around the perimeter of the library could deter people with ill-intentions and help allay fears on the part of staff especially during the third shift where staff work throughout the night till morning.

Generally, it could be deduced that little attention has been paid to staff security and this is evident in the inadequate measures that are provided to reduce or curb any security breach against staff during working hours. This is shown in the responses in the figure below. Respondents were asked to indicate whether enough attention has been placed on security of staff or not. Responses are shown on the figure 2

Figure 2: Attention paid to security by the library

Source: Field data, 2017

Challenges

The Sam Jonah Library like any academic library that is committed to carrying out its mandate in the most ideal environment would under normal circumstances like to guarantee the safety of not only its users and its collections but also more importantly its staff.

There are however factors that militate against the library's drive to guarantee the security and safety of its staff comprehensively.

First and perhaps the most important is the constraint imposed by inadequate finances. The library can identify a series of measures that could go a long way to forestall security breaches in the library and guarantee staff safety to a large extent but these measures do not get implemented as a result of inadequate finance. Contemporary interventions like the installation of Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV), Panic buttons and other logistics though are available, they do not come cheap and the strain on an already dwindling library budget ensures that these measures cannot be implemented.

The same financial constraint can be attributed to as the reason for the inadequate number of appropriately costumed and adequately resourced security personnel needed to patrol the premises and floors of the library.

Again it is very common for academic libraries to undertake a risk assessment of their operations. This provides these libraries with an idea of the possible weaknesses and threats in their operations that could possibly escalate into disasters if not properly managed. However, having this knowledge and acting on this knowledge seems to be two very different things to most academic libraries in Ghana. The option of spending a portion of an already measly library

budget to forestall a situation that is not guaranteed to manifest does not find its way to the top of the priorities of these academic libraries and quite understandably so.

Conclusion

Libraries are public places which are not exempted from violence. Sadly, extinction of crimes in libraries is impossible due to the inherently unpredictable nature of the humans who work and patronise the library facility. Also, in the course of service delivery in the library, librarians want to be very effective and convivial in service delivery and be open to patrons as much as possible. However, this openness gives room for abuse from some clients or patrons they intend serving and this might not sit well withstaff who do not want to be taken for granted. Academic libraries in Africa and particularly Ghana do not control access to the library and quite rightly so. This makes it quite impossible for staff to ascertain the legitimacy and illegitimacy of visitors who purport to use the library. For this reason problem users such as drug addicts and mentally challenged people have the opportunity to always enter the library without any limitation or screening. These class of users are most often the cause of the varied forms of abuse (verbal, sexual and physical) reported in academic libraries. Even though, physical abuse is very rare, preventive measures are always essential to reduce significantly if not eradicate the rate at which crimes in whichever format occur in the library. This research brings to light the gap in literature on staff security in libraries and why more attention should be placed on security concerns in libraries. There is an urgent and growing need for libraries to recognize the importance of securing the safety of staff and users alike.Problems are likely to be solved when they are recognized first. Therefore, if the library recognize the significance of security of staff enough

policies and measures would be laid down as well as used to ensure effective staff security and the general safety of the library. Members of staff are more likely to work effectively when they realize that their wellbeing which includes their security and safety is of the utmost concern to leadership.

Recommendations

Recommendations proffered by the respondents to ensure staff security include the following:

- Controlling access by the use of biometric machines to prevent unauthorized entry by some users. Library management should install biometric finger print machine which users may finger print before the door is opened for them to enter the library. If this is done unauthorized users may not be able to enter the library.

- Installation of Closed Circuit Television cameras at sensitive places such as the reference section and reading areas. This will be closely monitored to check those who may put up dangerous behaviors. This will also help to check intruders and will help to reduce incidents such as sexual harassment and verbal abuse. Again, the mere presence of the CCTV cameras will instill fear into visitors and they would want to behave well knowing that they would be captured by the camera.

- Library authorities should stress the need for permanent security personnel in the library to the university authorities. Adequate and qualified security to be present in the morning, evening and night shift which would help to scare people who may have ill intentions against staff or the library facility in general.

- Promulgation of a security policy or document would formalize courses of action during any security breach incidences. This policy should be very comprehensive and widely circulated and give the guidelines to preventing crimes and violence in the library as well as courses of action in the case of such eventualities.

- The library management should consider giving staff adequate training in customer relations. This is to equip staff to be able to foresee stress in patrons in order not to exacerbate the situation. It will also help staff to know how to relate to users in order not to start any arguments which may lead to verbal abuse.

- Channels of reporting incidents should be made clear to staff by management

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