

## **THEFT AND MUTILATION OF LIBRARY MATERIALS IN SPECIAL LIBRARIES; A CASE STUDY OF LAUTECH MEDICAL LIBRARY, COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES OSOGBO**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This research work set out to ascertain the level of theft and mutilation of information materials in LAUTECH Medical Library Osogbo. It has been noticed that major problem facing the development of most special libraries is the consistent rising in the level of theft and mutilation of information materials causing a decline in the volume of the library collections. In order to successfully carry out this study, a survey research method was adopted, using questionnaires and observation as the major instruments for data collection aside from examining relevant documents/materials affected to collect necessary statistics about the library. Descriptive statistical method, which uses the simple percentage was used to analyze the data collected pie charts are also used for data presentation, thereby enabling for easy discussion and interpretation of data. At end of data gathering, it was found out that theft and mutilation do occur in the LAUTECH Medical Library Osogbo, just like in every other institution libraries, but at a reduced rate, through various ways analyzed in the study. As a result of these, the researchers concluded that theft and mutilation of library materials could go a long way in hindering effective services provision necessary for meeting the diverse information and research needs of the users in the library. A number of recommendations were put forward for prevention of theft and mutilation in LAUTECH Medical Library Osogbo.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Theft, Mutilation, Library, Materials, Medical*

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### **Article History**

**Received: 25 May 2018 | Revised: 23 Jun 2018 | Accepted: 02 Jul 2018**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

A Library can be defined as an institution that acquires organizes, preserves, and make available the recorded knowledge of man to the users, a library can also be defined as a collection of book and non-book materials organized and kept for reading, studying and consultation. Nwalo, K.I.N (2000) library play vital role in the development of individuals in our society. The quality of library resources both print and electronic determines a quality of graduates produced and research development. Philip, Usman A. (2013) identified library as one of the pillars of civilization, no nation can function effectively without the use of the library. Aina (2004). Opines that a library is concerned with the collection, processing, storage and dissemination of recorded information for the purpose of reading, study, and consultations.

Iyanda and Salawu (2006) on the other hand sees the library as a building, an instructional and self-development center, which operate as an integral part of the entire school environment.

A medical library is designed to assist physicians health professionals, students, patients consumers, medical researchers and information specialists in finding health and scientific information to improve, update, assess or evaluate health care.

Library materials are many and varied, but they can be divided into two broad categories namely: printed and non-printed materials. The printed materials are books, pamphlets, periodicals, newspaper and references resources. Non printed materials can be grouped into three categories audio, visual and audiovisual. We also have electronic materials in the libraries.

Popoola and Haliso (2009) define library information materials as those information bearing materials that are in both printed and electronic format, such as textbooks journals, indexes abstracts, Newspapers and magazine, reports, computers CD-ROM databases, Internet/E-mail;, Videotapes/cassettes, diskettes, magnetic disc e.t.c. out of which printed materials are more vulnerable to theft and mutilations.

A library is an institution set up to cater for educational, cultural, research, recreational and information needs of users. Library has the main objective of been entrusted with the selection, acquisition, organization, storage, and dissemination of information to their patrons. It was observed that these libraries assume a focal point where users of diversified age group, social political, economic background and cultural interest have to converge to utilize all available resources that are relevant to their needs. As a result of this diverse use of materials, these libraries stand to be vulnerable to all forms of crime and security risk from not only the users but the library staff as well.

### **Background to the Study**

The problem of theft and mutilation of information materials has been an unavoidable problem in the library world from quite some time now varying from academics, school, public, private and special libraries.

As a result of the rising incident of library theft and mutilation of information materials, libraries are suffering serious losses of books and other library properties.

From the earliest time to the present, librarians are bothered on how to ensure the protection of library material from theft and damage. As the custodian of library materials and resources, librarians own an obligation to their patrons and users to preserve the library stocks. A depletion of available materials means a reduction in how they can serve and satisfy the needs of patrons (Peter, D. 2000). besides, non-availability of library materials might connote inefficiency on the part of the librarians and other information professionals who keep such material. It is therefore in their interest, in the interest of the profession and in the interest of their patrons to preserve available materials and resources from theft and mutilation. Book theft according to (Bello, A. S. 2001) is the intentional removal of books from the library in an unauthorized manner.

Special libraries are libraries established to meet the highly specialized requirement of professionals of different groups. It could also be defined as that library which is established for the acquisition, organization, preservation, and dissemination of special area of information. A special library is one that serves a group of users or readers who are united in training, professional societal goal, or a particular identifiable subject also, a library is special when its covers a

specialized collection, a special subject or a particular group of users or even a type of parent organization, a special collection..

LAUTECH Medical library Osogbo is a typical example of the special library. The library is a branch departmental library set up in order to take care of the information, teaching and research needs of LAUTECH Medical students, lecturers, medical doctors of both college of health sciences and teaching hospital communities. The library was established under the edit establishing the Ladoke Akintola University of Technology Ogbomoso which later gave birth to LAUTECH Medical Library Osogbo on the 17<sup>th</sup> August 1998 and opened for users on 25<sup>th</sup> August 1998.

At the inception, the library had only one staff called library coordinator until March 1999 when a library attendant was again employed. All medical books and journal in the main library i.e. Olusegun Oke Library Ogbomoso were moved to LAUTECH Medical library, Osogbo. The materials cutting across all department in the clinical faculty, today there are about 5000 titles of textbooks and over 2000 journals/ magazine volumes as well as e-library services to users of the library which has now meet the standard of Nigeria Medical and Dental Council (NMDC), Nursing Council and Medical Laboratory Council.

In the inception, the library participates in Book Aid International (BIA) connection with local and international libraries has to lead to tremendous growth in terms of core medical library resources today. It is not an overstatement to also say that LAUTECH Medical library has witnessed a tremendous growth in the last six years both in terms of building and the library book resources as well as facilities. There is also one of the best E-Library building standing alone beside the main medical library.

Today, the library can boast of 23 members of staff which include professional librarians, paraprofessional, library assistant, secretary, security officers, portals and casual workers. The basic functional services of the library include;

- Selection, acquisition, processing, and organization of materials
- Keeping users profile to enable the library in rendering selection dissemination of information
- Abstracting
- Compilation of bibliography
- Loan services
- Current Awareness Services
- Photocopy Services
- Inter-Library Loan Services
- Electronic Library Services
- Selective Dissemination of Information

### **Objectives of the Study**

- To find out the possible causes of book theft and mutilation in LAUTECH Medical Library, Osogbo.
- To identify various ways use in stealing and mutilating of library resources.
- To suggest measures to be taken to curb/minimize/discourage these types of unethical behaviors to determine the effect of materials theft and mutilation on LAUTECH Media library.
- To ascertain the kind of punishment met for the culprits found in the habit of stealing and mutilation library materials.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The research employed the survey research method to gather both primary and secondary data for this study. The researchers used two instruments for the collection of reliable information and data. These are questionnaires and personal observations. The population consists of LAUTECH Medical Students, Nursing Students, Biomedical Students, Postgraduate Students and Community Medicine Students who were registered library users. Data collected were analyzed using frequency and simple percentage.

### **Significance of the Study**

The study will draw the attention of libraries to the fact that periodical stocktaking of physical inventory of the library collection is important. This study will be of assistance to librarians in finding solutions to the problems of materials theft and mutilation of books in libraries.

### **Scope of the Study**

The scope of this study was limited to the LAUTECH MEDICAL Library, Osogbo with a view to identifying the extent of library materials theft and mutilation among its patrons which includes students, Medical doctors, lecturers, scientists, and researchers.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

In recent years, libraries have become more and more concerned with the disappearance of books from the library collections, and are increasingly convinced that this disappearance seriously reduced the quality of library services that can be provided to readers. (Obikoya 1994).

Obikoya, further stated that theft and mutilation of print and non-print published and unpublished materials of medical libraries is a social malady which is causing the financial drain on the meager resources and serious inconvenience not only to the parent body but also to staff and users of the library as well. She concluded that crime in and against libraries is becoming a serious problem whereby a considerable number of materials were written off or discarded by medical libraries as a result of mutilation by library clients.

Afolabi (1993), while given a critical appraisal on theft and mutilation of library materials, said that the major reasons for these vices have not been well addressed; he, however, identified other contributing factors such as economic, political, social, and environmental factors.

Ajayi and Omotayo (2003) agreed that the worsening state of libraries in Nigeria in the past decade, like any other countries of the world, has been experiencing difficult economic conditions. Many students could not afford the high cost of textbooks, salaries are not paid to their parents as at when due and many are retrenched or retired from the job. In a situation like this students and staff rely heavily on libraries to provide their information needs. This single reason leads to the constant use of books, and some that are too greedy are likely to steal or tear the salient pages.

The environments in which users operate contribute to book theft and mutilation. The environment of an educational institution is that of high academic competition. In an attempt to obtain better grades than their colleagues, some students indulge in hiding information materials or putting it on other shelves so others could not make use of it. In addition to the factors, Afolabi (1993) defined it as an informal problem within the library that contributes to theft and mutilation of information materials in the library such as the identified non-availability of reprography facilities, inadequate information source, and security.

Fijabi (1998) also highlighted some of these internal factors which are categories into four basic areas, namely: Users (researchers and students), staff finance and Infrastructural Facilities. On Library users, he remarked that Scientist and students constitute the larger percentage of users responsible for theft and mutilation of information materials in the library. He stated the other categories of users and identified the reasons why in spite of security measures taken by librarians students still carry out the act of theft, poaching and mutilation of information materials in the library; The first reason given was that of poverty. He identified poverty as a social phenomenon both complex and multi-dimensional, largely a contributing factor responsible for theft and mutilation in libraries. In his words, poaching is one of the social costs of poverty. A situation where the parent cannot afford the cost of books for their children in school, such student will see poaching as an alternative or suitable way of meeting their academic needs. He also stated the profligate i.e. a person or group of people given to worldly extravagant and self-indulgent expenditure. He draws home his point by pointing accusing fingers at some students who spend extravagantly on expensive clothes at the expense of books.

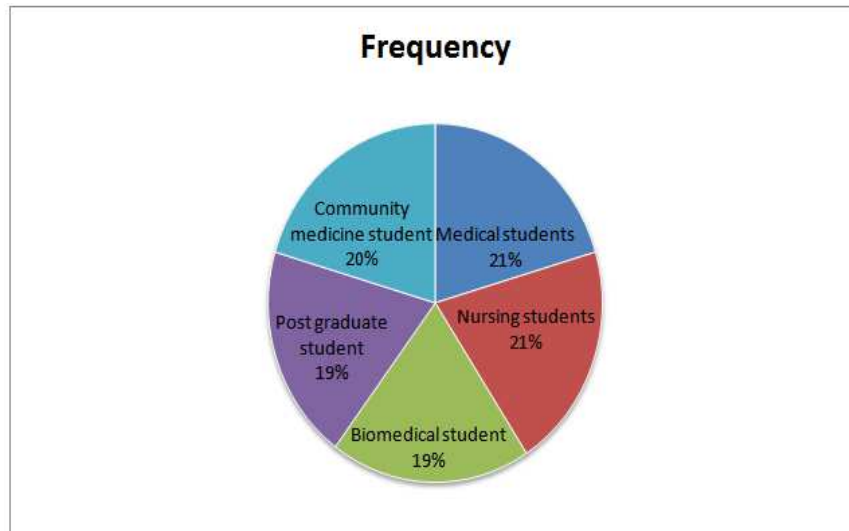
On the economic factors, Ajayi and Omotayo (2003) agreed that the working state of libraries in Nigeria in the past decades, like any other countries of the world, has been experiencing the difficult economic condition. Many students could not afford the high cost of textbooks. Salaries are not paid to their parent as at when due and many are retrenched. In a situation like this, students and staff rely heavily on the library to provide their information needs. This singular reason led to the constant use of books in the hands of many users and those that are too greedy are likely to steal or tear the salient pages.

Since most libraries are funded by the government, thieves tend to feel and believe that government property is nobody's property. According to California preservative clearing house (CPC) (2001), another factor responsible for students; an illegal act of taking information materials out of culture. It is the basic duty of librarians to educate or integrate proper handling of information materials into young library users. Most library users have a poor reading habit and their primary intention whenever they are in the library is to go away with the virtual books. some are even in the habit of defacing information materials in the library so that other serious users who intend reading such materials would find it difficult to read and understand the content of such materials.

Afolabi, quoted by Isebe, L. E. M.(2014) state that mutilation of information materials are caused by library users, insects, and other animals and also by climatic conditions including hazards.

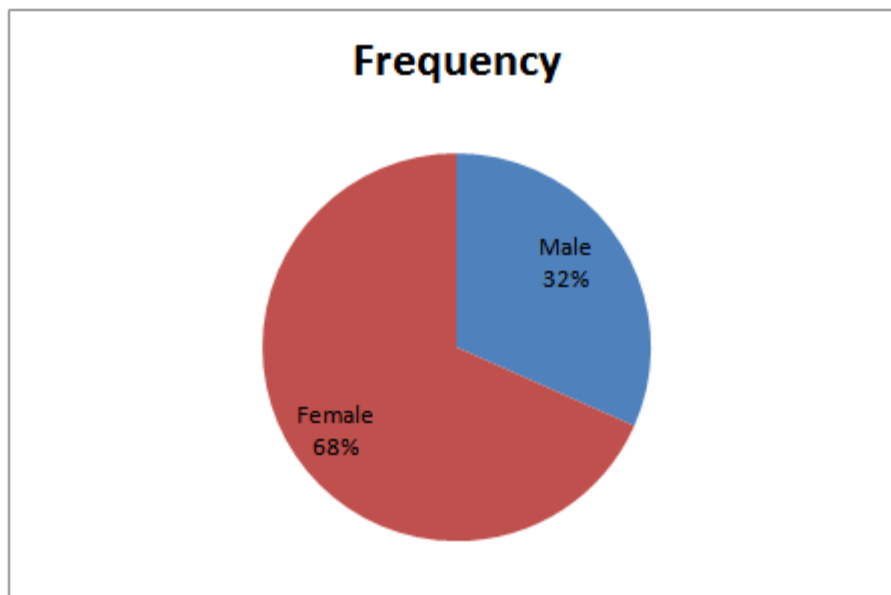
**Data Presentation, Analysis, and Interpretation**

This research sets out to find out the cause and effects of theft and mutilation of information materials in LAUTECH Medical Library Osogbo, Osun State.



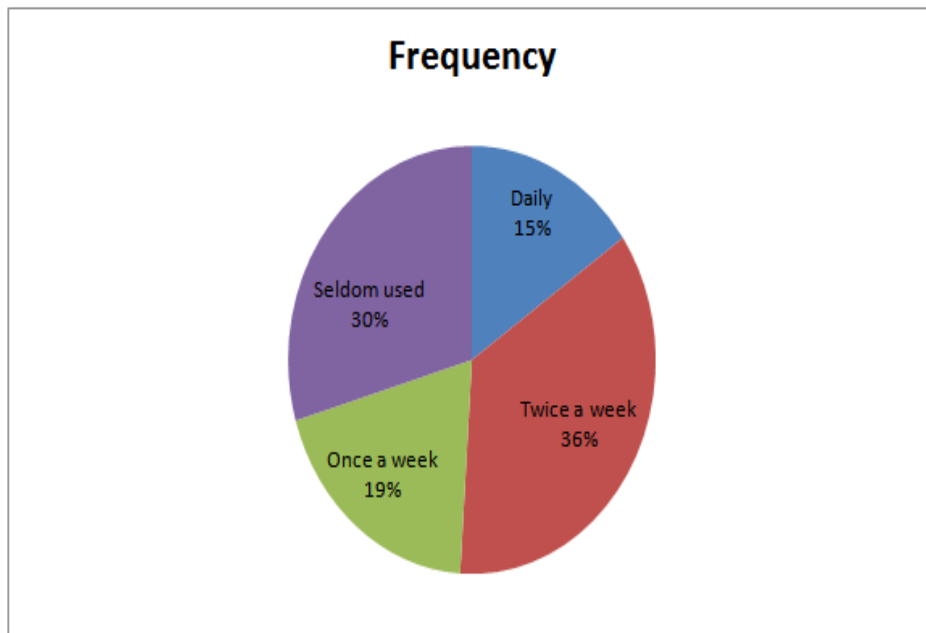
**Figure 1: Distribution of Respondents by Names of Departments**

Figure 1 shows the names of different departments with the numbers of questionnaires distributed and returned from each department. Twenty questionnaires each distributed to Medical, students, nursing. Students and community medicine students were returned while 19 copies of questionnaire out of twenty questionnaires to biomedical students and postgraduate. Students were returned one of each questionnaire as voided from the two departments.



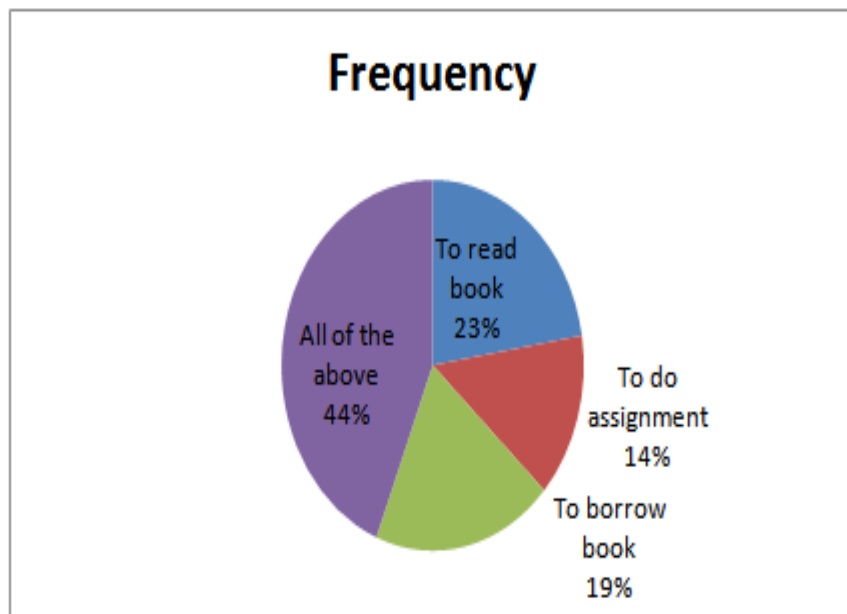
**Figure 2: Percentage and Frequency Distribution of Gender of the Students**

Figure 2 it shows that 31.6% of the students are male while 68.4% were found to be female students.



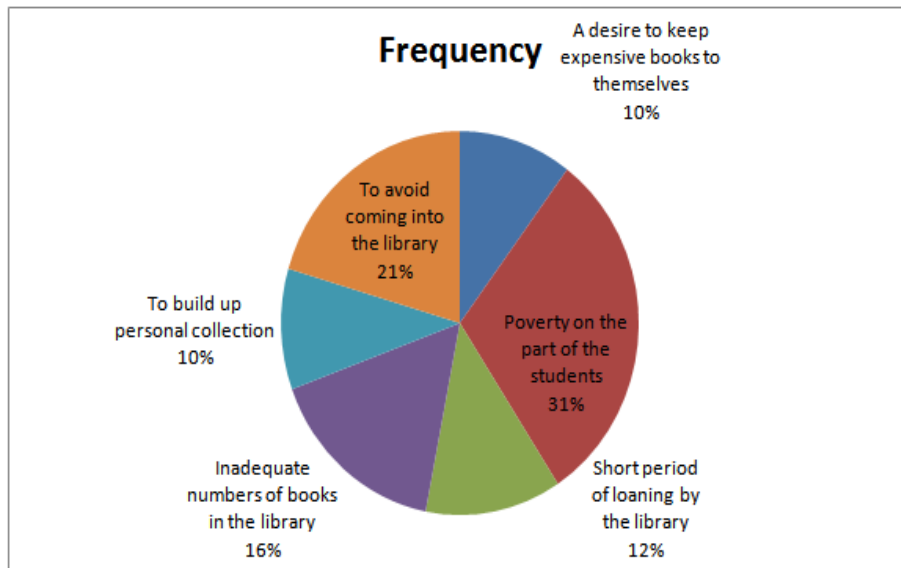
**Figure 3: How often do you Use Library**

Figure 3 shows the frequency of the students in the library. It is worthy of note that majority of the library users as the student who makes use of the library twice a week and this was established by the highest of response 35 i.e. (35.7%) total response. The 15.31% of the total response comes to the library daily at all cost. While 19.38% comes to the library once a week and 29.6% seldom make use of the library resources.



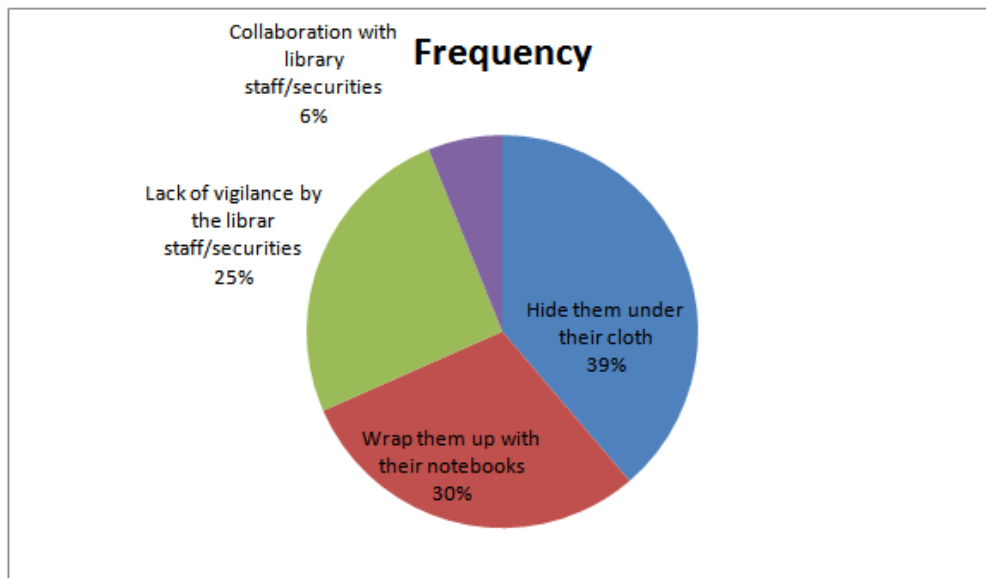
**Figure 4: Why do you Visit the Library**

Figure 4 above indicates that many users of the medical library do mostly visit the library to read books, do an assignment and borrow books 43 (43.9%). 22% of the respondents come to the library to read books only while 19.4% visit to do borrow books and 14.29% visit to do assignments.



**Figure 5: Why do you Think Readers Steal Library Materials?**

In Figure V correspondent was asked to indicate why they think readers steal library materials, the majority of the respondent believed that stealing of the library materials was as a result of poverty, with 30 or ( 30.61%). This indicates that they stole books because they do not have money to buy their own textbooks, followed by stealing to avoid coming into the library i.e. 20(20.41%) these set of respondent prefer to read in their hostel after daily lectures or ward round in the hospital. 16(16.33%) of the respondent stole books as a result of inadequate library materials. 12(12.24%) steal books due to the short period of loaning by the library while 10(10.20%) was due to the desire to keep expensive materials to themselves and to build their own personal library.

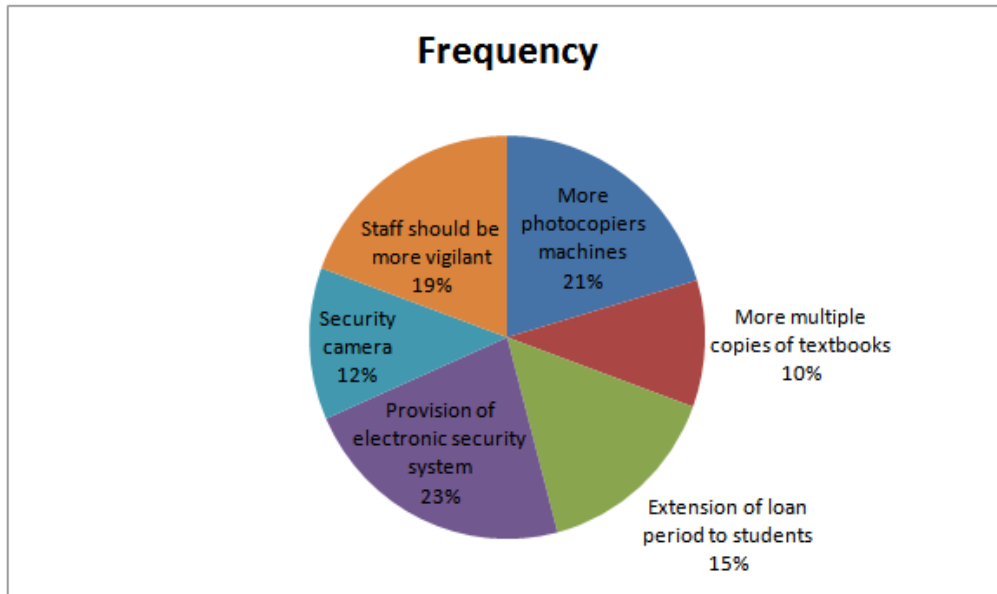


**Figure 6: Which of the Following Ways do you Think Users Take Materials Out of the Library Undetected?**

Figure 6 indicates that 38 (38.8%) of the respondents felt that those who steal library materials do so by hiding them under the cloths and laboratory coats, followed by 29(29.6%) wrapping them up with their notebooks while 25(25%)

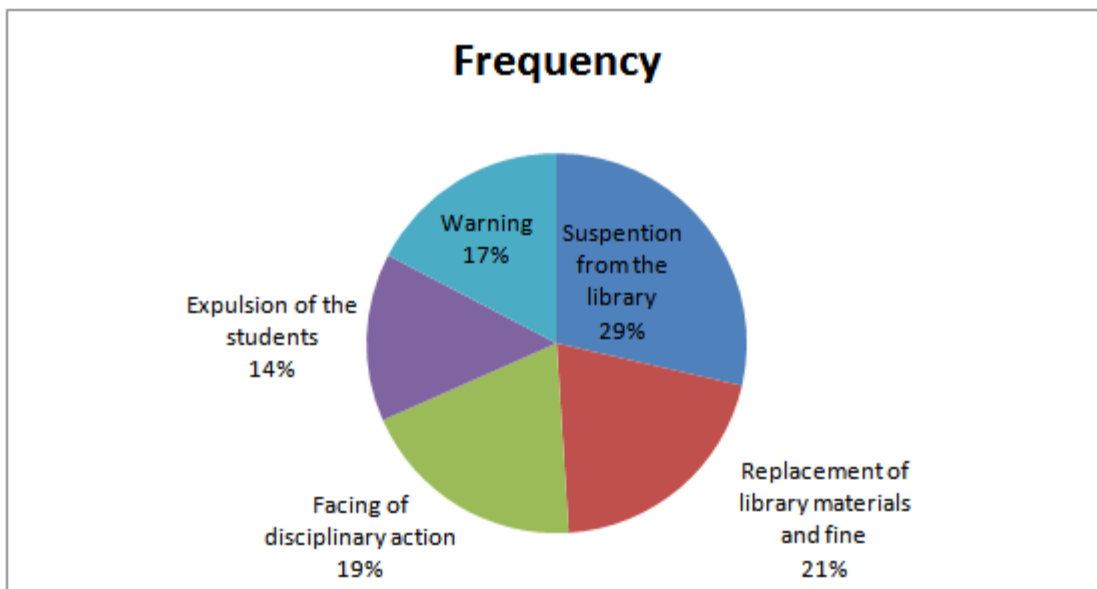


indicated lack of vigilance on the parts of library staffs/security as a way users take materials out of the library. Lastly, 6 (6.12%) identified collaboration as a means of stealing library materials.



**Figure 7: Suggested Preventive Method to reduce Theft and Mutilation of Library Materials**

In Figure 7, The respondents were asked to suggest preventive measures to reduce theft and mutilation of Library materials. The Figure above shows that 22 (22.4%) of the respondents suggested the provision of the electronic security system, 20 (20.41%) of the respondents suggested more photocopies machines. While 19 (19.4%) suggested that the staff should be more vigilance and 15 (15.3%) indicated the extension of the loan period. 12 (12.24%) suggested the provision of security camera and 10 (10.2%) suggested the acquisition of multiple copies of textbooks.



**Figure 8: What Punishment do you think is Appropriate for the Offenders?**

From Figure viii one can infer that 28 respondents (28.6%) agreed that when a person steals library materials he or she should be suspended from the library use. While 20 (20.4%) suggested that such a library user should be replaced

such materials and paid fine. 19 (19.4%) agreed that when a person steals library materials he/she should be faced disciplinary action from the library management. 17 (17.3%) suggested that such users should be warned.

### **Summary of the Findings**

Based on the presentation and analysis of data, mutilation and theft of information materials by users exist in Lautech Medical Library Osogbo. From findings a lot of factors are responsible for theft and mutilation of information materials by users are, some of these are the low financial status of readers to purchase their needed books, poor security system, shortage of loan period, inadequate photocopies services. etc.

The at which users tend to steal or mutilate information materials are through tearing of relevant pages of books, hiding them under their laboratory cloth, wrap them with their notebooks, collaboration with library staff and library securities, folding pages of books so as to prevent the page from closing. Underlining important sentences in the books with marker or biro. e. t. c.

The users suggested measure to be put in place to reduce this antisocial act of theft and mutilation of library resources such as the provision of more photocopying machines acquisition of multiple copies of textbooks and journals, an extension of loan periods, provision of the electronics system, security camera. e.t.c.

Moreover, various suggestions were suggested as punishment for offenders.

In all, it was discovered that the level of theft and mutilation in Lautech Medical Library Osogho is relatively low compared to the note of other Libraries this maybe as a result of the kinds of students involved i.e. Medical Students

### **CONCLUSIONS**

It is quite obvious from the study that theft and mutilation of library resources affect students education, a student cannot use the library resources to their fullest because they cannot find books and journal articles on the shelves.

The result of this case study shows that the problem of theft and mutilation is costly and destructive to the library and its users. It is therefore, necessary that the library management should also put in place measures in combating theft and mutilation in the library.

### **Recommendations**

In the light of findings from the study conducted it is discovered that the library will have to solve some problems before it can achieve its goals. Recommendation is hereby given based on these identified problems theft and mutilation. These recommendations are as follows:

Education users on the cost and difficulties of replacement of stolen and mutilated materials.

Creating awareness of the problems associated with theft and mutilation of library resources in the College and University news bulletin with the warning that theft and mutilation is a punishable crime.

Multiple copies of books in the circulation section and those displayed in the open stack should be provided since it is discovered that textbooks are the most affected by theft and mutilation. The library should adopt the use of new technology on security to solve some of the problem caused by theft and mutilation e.g. security camera.

Providing an adequate number of photocopiers exhibition of mutilated books with some comments to appeal to their consciences.

Windows and other openings apart from the entrance should be covered with strong wire mesh to defer throwing out of library materials. Inservice training courses be encouraged by the library to enlighten, particularly the junior staffs on what library profession is all about. This will enhance the efficiency of the workers.

The library should map out different campaign strategies like pasting posters containing warning against theft and mutilation and other library rules and regulations.

The library stock taken should be done at least three times a year, this will help the library staff to know if the library collections are reducing.

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