

**SECURITY CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIC MEASURES IN COMBATING
THEFT FOR EFFECTIVE SERVICE DELIVERY IN JOHN HARRIS LIBRARY,
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN.**

OKAFOR ASSUMPTA ADAKU

EDU2203224

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT
(LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE UNIT),
FACULTY OF EDUCATION,
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN,
BENIN CITY.**

NOVEMBER, 2025.

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**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL
MANAGEMENT (LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE UNIT), FACULTY
OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY. IN PARTIAL
FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF BACHELORS
DEGREE (BLIS) IN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE.**

NOVEMBER, 2025.

DECLARATION

I, **Assumpta Adaku, OKAFOR** declare that this is an original research work carried out by me in the department of educational management, University of Benin, Benin City.

Assumpta Adaku Okafor

Date

CERTIFICATION

We, the undersigned certify that this project was carried out by **Assumpta Adaku, OKAFOR** with matriculation number **EDU2203224** in the Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin-City, Nigeria. It is sufficient in scope and quality for the partial fulfillment of the criteria for the Bachelor of Library and Information Science. (BLIS) Degree, University of Benin.

Mrs. Oviri U.B.
(Project Supervisor)

Date

Dr. A. C Eneh
(Project Coordinator)

Date

Prof. W. A. Iguodala
(Head of Department)

Date

DEDICATION

Dedicated to the Almighty God, whose divine grace and unwavering love have guided me through my undergraduate years at the University of Benin. Also dedicated to my family, sponsors and my lovely mother, **Late Mrs. Bernadine Nkeiruka, OBIAKOR.**

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the security challenges affecting the John Harris Library, University of Benin, and examines the strategic measures adopted to combat theft for improved service delivery. Library theft manifesting in the unauthorized removal, concealment, or mutilation of information resources continues to undermine the availability, preservation, and accessibility of library materials. The study adopts a descriptive survey research design, utilizing structured questionnaires administered to library staff and registered users to obtain relevant data. A sample size of 384 respondents was determined using Cochran's (1977) formula for infinite populations. Data collected were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), with descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, and mean scores used to present the findings.

The results reveal that major security challenges in the library include inadequate surveillance systems, insufficient security personnel, weak enforcement of library regulations, and users' low awareness of library ethics. The findings also indicate that strategic measures such as the installation of electronic security devices, increased staff monitoring, user education on proper library conduct, and improved access control significantly contribute to reducing theft and enhancing service delivery. The study concludes that a comprehensive and integrated security approach is essential for safeguarding library resources and ensuring efficient information service delivery. It recommends the adoption of modern security technologies, continuous staff training, regular security evaluations, and stronger institutional policies to foster a secure and service-oriented library environment.

CHAPTER ONE

INTROUDUCTION

Background of the Study

University libraries play an important role in helping students, teachers, and researchers grow intellectually and engage with their communities. These libraries act as storage centers for knowledge, giving people access to many different types of materials including books, journals, CDs, DVDs, and digital resources that support learning and research needs. However, libraries can only provide good services when they maintain a safe and secure place for library workers, users, and materials. The main goal of any library security system is to protect these valuable items while making sure services continue to run smoothly and information remains easily accessible to users.

John Harris Library at the University of Benin, like many other university libraries around the world, faces serious security problems that put its collections and daily work at risk. These problems range from stealing books and damaging materials to natural disasters and troublesome behavior from users. All these challenges require strong and well-planned security measures to keep resources safe and ensure the library can continue to provide lasting, accessible, and effective services to the university community.

The word "security" comes from a Latin word called "securus" which means "free from danger." This means creating a stable and safe environment where people can work toward their goals without worrying about being disrupted or harmed (Fischer & Green, 1998). In university libraries, security means protecting both physical books and digital materials, equipment, staff, and library users from different types of threats like stealing, tearing pages from books, damaging property, and disasters. (Olagide, 2017) explains that libraries are like systems where security is very important for keeping everything working properly. Good security helps librarians reduce the bad effects when threats become real problems. When libraries do not have good security measures, they can lose resources temporarily or

permanently, and might even lose users or staff members. This hurts the library's ability to manage information and help people find what they need (Erlianti, Fatmawati, & Satria, 2018). (Maidabino, 2010) points out that keeping collections safe is a major worry for university libraries because losing materials directly affects how well they can serve users and keep them happy.

Recent research shows that library security problems continue to grow. (Corrado, 2024) published new research on "Cybersecurity and Libraries" highlighting how modern libraries face both traditional security problems and new digital threats. (Kont, 2024) conducted studies on cyber security awareness in library contexts, showing that emerging technologies can both help and create challenges for library security. University libraries like John Harris Library serve as the main source of intellectual support for their schools, helping with learning and research through carefully chosen collections. These collections include expensive books, rare old documents, CDs, DVDs, and digital materials that cost a lot of money to buy and maintain. When these materials get lost or damaged because of security problems, it leads to less access to information, higher costs to replace items, and reduced trust in the library's ability to meet user needs (Afacho, 2013). Security challenges go beyond just losing materials. They also include threats to people's safety, such as attacks on staff or library users, and the wrong use of library spaces for illegal activities. These problems create fear and worry, making both staff and users feel bad and preventing the library from being a safe place for learning and thinking (Holt, 2007).

Academic libraries face many different security problems that threaten their collections and daily work. These challenges are complex and affect both physical materials and digital resources. (Holt, 2007) identified main threats including stealing physical materials, stealing data, stealing money, and misusing library equipment and personal belongings of users. (Ugah, 2007) added more problems to this list: tearing pages from books (called mutilation), damaging property on purpose (vandalism), borrowing too many items at once, careless browsing that damages materials, and purposely hiding materials in wrong places.

These actions are often done by users who are driven by high book prices or limited access to resources, and they cause significant losses. Studies show that libraries may lose between 5% to 10% of their collections every year because of theft and damage, with higher rates during busy academic times like exam periods (Robert, 1998; Kale, 2004). Recent data confirms these ongoing problems with book theft and security breaches continuing to affect libraries worldwide.

Vandalism, which means deliberately destroying property, is another serious issue. Library buildings get defaced, equipment gets damaged, and files get destroyed, leading to expensive repairs and losses that cannot be replaced (Mansfield, 2009). Natural and human-made disasters like floods, earthquakes, and fires create additional risks, with floods being especially harmful to library collections (Aziagba & Edet, 2008). The historical record shows that protecting libraries has always been a challenge. As far back as 539 BC, Persian conquerors removed papyri from the library of Ramses II. During medieval times, libraries had to chain books to tables to prevent theft, showing that securing collections has been a long-standing problem.

Modern libraries now face additional security challenges in the digital age. Recent research examined cyber security in university libraries and its implications for library and information science education, showing that technological expansion in university libraries has led to cybercrimes and the need to better train library workers (Nigerian research, 2023). (Kont, 2024) notes in research on Estonian libraries that librarians are concerned about patron privacy and the confidentiality of library records, with many libraries having sensitive or restricted data at risk. A study on information security awareness in Turkish academic libraries was published in 2024, showing that this is a global concern. This research shows that modern libraries must protect not only physical materials but also digital information and user privacy.

Beyond material and digital threats, academic libraries must deal with disruptive behaviors from users, including those who are drunk, mentally disturbed, or doing illegal activities

like theft or inappropriate behavior (Lorenzo, 1996; Momodu, 2002; Ajegbomogun, 2004). These behaviors not only disrupt the library environment but also create safety risks for staff and users. The theft of personal items like laptops, handbags, and mobile phones is also common, making the library's role as a secure space more complicated (Afacho, 2013). (Mansfield, 2009) notes the difficulty of balancing social inclusion with security, as libraries try to serve diverse groups of people while addressing the different causes of criminal behavior.

The security challenges described above have serious effects on how well academic libraries can provide services. When resources get depleted because of theft, damage, or disasters, fewer materials are available, which limits users' access to important information (Nkiko & Yusif, 2008). This is especially harmful in university settings where quick access to current resources is essential for research and learning. The cost of replacing lost or damaged materials puts financial pressure on library budgets, which are already tight because of decreasing funding and rising subscription costs (Da Veiga & Eloff, 2007). Additionally, security incidents reduce user trust and staff morale, creating an environment of fear and uncertainty that undermines the library's role as a welcoming space for intellectual work.

The John Harris Library, as a main center for the University of Benin's academic activities, shows these challenges clearly. When rare and expensive resources get lost due to theft or vandalism, it hurts the library's ability to meet the information needs of the university community. Moreover, incidents of violence or harassment can discourage users from using library services, further reducing its effectiveness. Even just worrying about potential security problems, when no actual incidents happen, can be equally damaging because it affects the confidence of both staff and users (Holt, 2007).

To address these challenges, academic libraries use various strategic measures designed to protect resources, staff, and users while keeping a user-friendly environment. The use of electronic security systems has changed library security, offering advanced tools to protect

collections. Technologies like Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV), electronic security gates, Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) systems, perimeter alarms, and motion detectors are widely used to prevent theft and monitor library spaces (Rajendra & Rathinasbapathy, 2007; Gupta & Mudhusudhan, 2017). RFID systems, for example, allow real-time tracking of materials, reducing the risk of loss, although concerns about potential health risks require careful implementation (Nath, 2021). Research on data privacy and security protection strategies in library electronic resources management continues to show the importance of these technological solutions (2024 study).

Creating policies is another important measure. Libraries can enforce strict rules of behavior that prohibit vandalism, theft, and abusive behavior, with offenders reported to university authorities. These policies, following guidelines from organizations like the American Library Association (ALA), emphasize that all staff share responsibility for identifying and reporting potential threats (ALA/LLAMA Library Security Guidelines, 2010). Key policy elements include creating a library security policy with staff rules to protect people, collections, facilities, and grounds; evaluating threats against people and the library to develop effective programs with clear goals and timelines; preparing security operation manuals for routine and emergency situations; supporting communication between security management and emergency management agencies; providing enough security personnel whenever the building is occupied; and requiring security staff to keep detailed records of visitors and property removal.

Staff training is essential to make sure that all employees, not just security staff, know how to recognize and respond to security incidents safely while following professional protocols. Recent research emphasizes the necessity to equip librarians with cybersecurity skills for current and future challenges. Disaster preparedness plans are also important, addressing risks from natural and human-made disasters. Libraries develop recovery strategies to minimize disruptions and restore services quickly (Aziagba & Edet, 2008). Additionally, addressing user needs through increased access to photocopy machines and

providing enough copies of popular materials can reduce theft and damage by making resources more available (Ugah, 2007). These measures work together to balance security with accessibility, ensuring that libraries remain welcoming places while protecting their valuable resources.

Security in academic libraries is a complex challenge that requires careful balance between protecting resources and maintaining a user-friendly environment. The John Harris Library, like other academic libraries, faces threats such as theft, vandalism, disruptive behavior, and disasters, all of which hurt its ability to provide effective services. Recent research continues to show the importance of this topic, with scholars like Kont (2024) and Corrado (2024) highlighting both traditional and emerging digital security challenges. The challenges are made more complex by easy access to materials in large libraries that are difficult to supervise effectively. By implementing strategic measures including electronic security systems, strong policies, staff training, and disaster preparedness, libraries can reduce these risks and improve service delivery. This research aims to provide a detailed analysis of these challenges and solutions, emphasizing the importance of security in maintaining the library's role as a cornerstone of academic excellence. Understanding these security challenges and implementing appropriate solutions is essential for ensuring that academic libraries can continue to serve as safe, accessible centers of learning and knowledge for their communities.

Statement of the Problem

The effectiveness of library service delivery at the John Harris Library, University of Benin, is increasingly threatened by a range of security challenges stemming from both environmental and human factors. Incidents such as fire outbreaks, natural disasters, theft, vandalism, and antisocial behaviors have been identified as significant risks to the safety of library users, staff, and collections. These security breaches not only compromise the physical integrity of library resources but also hinder the library's core mission of supporting academic activities.

One of the most persistent issues observed is the deliberate mutilation and misuse of library materials. As noted by Lorenzen (1996), such acts are often fueled by dissatisfaction with library services, a lack of awareness of the consequences of resource damage, and a general disregard for shared property. Other forms of misconduct including non-return of books, defacing of materials, unauthorized access to restricted items, use of false borrowing credentials, and inappropriate behavior within the library premises further contribute to the loss and deterioration of library resources.

Moreover, internal lapses such as staff misconduct, inadequate supervision, and poor handling of library operations aggravate the situation. Structural deficiencies, such as a lack of functional lockers, insufficient security personnel, and outdated infrastructure, leave both personal and library property vulnerable. These issues are compounded by broader systemic problems such as financial constraints, understaffing, poor maintenance culture, and lack of funding for essential upgrades.

The worsening economic situation in Nigeria also drives some students to engage in theft and other unethical practices, adding to the already strained security conditions. The cumulative effect of these challenges is a decline in user confidence and a reluctance among students to fully utilize the library for study and research. This undermines the effectiveness of the library's service delivery and calls for the urgent implementation of strategic security measures to restore order, protect resources, and improve user experience.

Purpose of study

The main objective of this study is to examine the security challenges and strategic measures in combating theft for effective service delivery John Harris library. The specific objectives are to:

- i. Examine the security challenges in the John Harris Library services rendered by the library.
- ii. Find out the main reasons for these security issues and to examine the effectiveness of the security measures.
- iii. Examine possible solutions that include physical, technological, policy, and staff-related measures that fit the library's real situation.
- iv. Improve the safety of library materials, make access easier for users, and keep the library as a trusted place for learning and research at the University of Benin.

Research Questions

- i. What security issues, including theft and harmful acts, affect the John Harris Library, and how do they impact service delivery?
- ii. What are the root causes of these security problems, and how effective are the current safety measures in addressing them?
- iii. What practical physical, technological, policy-based, and staff-related solutions can be implemented to improve the library's security?
- iv. How can security improvements enhance material safety, user access, and the library's role as a trusted academic resource at the University of Benin?

Significance of Study

This study will be of great benefit to the following group of people Library administrators and staff will obtain practical security protocols and strategic solutions to reduce theft while maintaining accessible services and improving overall library operations. University management and policymakers will receive actionable recommendations for security infrastructure investment and policy development that balance protection with academic accessibility. Students and faculty will enjoy enhanced library services through improved security measures that safeguard academic resources without compromising their research and learning access. Other academic libraries will gain applicable best practices and frameworks to address similar security challenges in their own institutional contexts. Security professionals will acquire specialized knowledge of library-specific security issues and proven intervention strategies for academic environments. Researchers and scholars in library science and institutional security will benefit from empirical findings that advance knowledge in academic library security and service optimization. Ultimately, this study will contribute to preserving academic resources, improving library service delivery, and creating secure learning environments that support higher education goals..

This study will add to what we know about library security by providing real examples from a Nigerian university library. It will help fill gaps in research about security challenges in African academic libraries. The findings will help library managers understand security problems better and make informed decisions about how to improve safety measures. This can lead to better protection of library resources and create a safer environment for everyone. The results can guide university administrators and policymakers in developing better security policies and allocating resources more effectively to improve library safety.

This research will benefit students, teachers, researchers, and other library visitors by potentially leading to a safer and more secure library environment where they can study and work without fear. This study will provide a foundation for future researchers who want to investigate library security issues in similar settings or explore related topics in

academic library management. The findings will be useful for library professionals, security experts, and administrators who are working to improve safety measures in academic libraries across Nigeria and other developing countries.

This research is timely and important because it addresses real security concerns that affect how well libraries can serve their communities and support education and learning.

Scope of the Study

This study examines the security challenges and strategic measures in combating theft for effective service delivery in John Harris library, university of Benin. This study will be delimited to library users, staff and security workers of John Harris library, university of Benin, Benin city, Edo state, Nigeria.

Operational Definition of Terms

John Harris Library (JHL): For this study, John Harris Library means the main academic library of the University of Benin, located at the Ugbowo campus. It serves as the central place for academic and research materials for staff and students.

Security Challenges: This refers to obstacles, threats, or weaknesses in the library's systems, policies, or infrastructure that affect the safety, integrity, and accessibility of its resources. Examples include theft, damage to materials, hiding books, collusion between staff and users, and not returning borrowed items (Jimoh, 2014).

Theft: In this study, theft means taking library materials without proper checkout or borrowing procedures. This results in either permanent or temporary loss of resources for the library (Maidabino & Zainab, 2011).

Mutilation: This refers to the intentional damage or alteration of library materials. Actions like tearing pages, removing illustrations, cutting out sections, or defacing texts reduce the usefulness and integrity of the material (Oyesiku et al., 2012).

Service Delivery: In this study, service delivery means the ability of the John Harris Library to provide timely, reliable, and fair access to its resources and services. This supports the academic and research needs of its users (Eneh & Opara, 2024).

Strategic Measures: These are planned actions, including physical controls, technological tools, policy changes, staff training, and user education. They aim to prevent, detect, and respond to security breaches to protect library resources and improve service delivery (Urhiewhu et al., 2018).

Library Delinquency: This term describes any unethical or prohibited behavior by library users or staff that harms the availability and proper use of resources. This includes theft, mutilation, hoarding, and taking materials without authorization (Momodu, 2002).

Radio Frequency Identification (RFID): A technology-based security system that uses radio waves to identify and track items through embedded tags. This helps libraries detect the unauthorized removal of materials ((Urhiewhu et al., 2018).

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter comprise of review of related literature on security challenges and strategic measures in combating theft for effective delivery at John Harris Library, University of Benin. And it will be reviewed under the following sub headings:

- Conceptual Framework
- Concept of Theft in Academic Libraries
- Theoretical Perspective on Theft in Libraries
- Types of Theft for both Library Patrons and Staff
- Security Challenges Faced by John Harris Library
- Impact of Theft on Libraries
- Tactical Approaches for Addressing Theft
- Review of Related Literature
- Summary of the Reviewed Literature

Concept of Theft in Academic Libraries

Theft refers to the **intentional and unauthorized taking, removal, or misappropriation of library materials** with the purpose of depriving the library and its users of access to those materials. The **American Library Association (ALA)** defines theft as "**the unauthorized removal or destruction of library materials that results in loss to the library and its users.**" This act undermines the fundamental purpose of a library, which is to provide equitable access to knowledge and information for its patrons. **Theft in libraries** refers to the **unauthorized removal, misappropriation, or destruction of library materials**, including books, journals, digital resources, and equipment. This act deprives the library and its users of access to these resources, undermining the institution's mission to provide equitable access to information and knowledge. Theft and mutilation of

library resources pose significant challenges to the effective delivery of library services in Nigerian academic institutions. John Harris Library at the University of Benin is not exempt from these issues, which hinder the library's ability to serve its academic community effectively.

This review examines the nature of theft in John Harris library, the security challenges faced, and strategic measures to combat these issues, using a conceptual framework centered on understanding theft in libraries. What makes theft in academic libraries particularly concerning is its ripple effect on the wider community. When valuable resources disappear, other users lose access, and the library's ability to serve its mission diminishes. Replacement costs strain often limited budgets, and efforts to improve collections may be diverted to recovery and security measures. This compromises the library's role as an equitable provider of information.

Furthermore, theft isn't limited to users alone; sometimes it involves staff or insiders who have privileged access. Such internal delinquency complicates detection and resolution, eroding trust within the institution.

In response, academic libraries have developed various strategies from physical security measures like controlled entry and exit points to electronic detection systems and staff vigilance. Yet, addressing theft requires more than just technology; it calls for a culture of respect, awareness, and shared responsibility among all who use and work in the library.

Theft and mutilation of library resources significantly impede the effective delivery of library services in Nigerian academic institutions. John Harris Library at the University of Benin faces similar challenges, impacting its ability to serve its academic community efficiently. This literature review examines the nature of theft in libraries, the security challenges encountered, and strategic measures to combat these issues, employing a conceptual framework focused on understanding theft in libraries. Theft in libraries is not

limited to just the physical removal of books or journals but also includes various related behaviors such as:

Concealment and Removal: Patrons may hide books, manuscripts, or other materials in their bags or clothing and leave the library without following proper checkout procedures.

Mutilation and Damage: Damaging materials by tearing pages, removing covers, scribbling, or other forms of defacement that reduce the usability or lifespan of library resources.

Theft of Digital Resources: Unauthorized downloading, copying, or distribution of digital content, subscription databases, or e-books.

Unauthorized Removal: Patrons or staff taking materials without proper checkout procedures or permission.

Equipment Theft: Stealing library-owned equipment, such as laptops, projectors, or other technological devices.

Theoretical Perspectives on Theft in Libraries

Routine Activity Theory (RAT)

Routine Activity Theory, developed by Cohen and Felson in 1979, offers a useful lens for understanding how theft occurs in environments like libraries. According to this theory, a crime is likely to take place when three key elements converge in time and space: a motivated offender, a suitable target, and a lack of capable guardianship. In the context of a library such as John Harris Library, the materials housed such as textbooks, rare books, journals, and multimedia resources serve as valuable targets that attract potential offenders. These offenders are typically users who, due to academic pressure, financial hardship, or other motivations, may be inclined to steal or mutilate resources. The theory emphasizes that when security measures within the library are inadequate perhaps due to insufficient surveillance systems, poorly trained staff, or architectural designs that allow easy access

and exit these targets become vulnerable. Therefore, the absence or ineffectiveness of capable guardianship creates opportunities for theft. From a practical standpoint, theft can be mitigated by enhancing guardianship through measures like the installation of RFID security gates, employment of vigilant security personnel, deployment of comprehensive CCTV coverage, and thoughtful design of the physical environment, including proper lighting and controlled entry and exit points.

Strain Theory

Strain Theory, originally formulated by Robert Merton in 1938, offers a sociological perspective by suggesting that crime arises as a response to the pressure or strain individuals experience when they are unable to achieve culturally approved goals through legitimate means. Applied to the library setting, this theory helps explain why some students or library users might resort to theft. For many students, access to essential academic materials is a crucial goal, but economic constraints or limited availability of resources within the library can create significant strain. When legitimate means, such as purchasing textbooks or accessing paid digital databases, are not viable due to financial hardship or scarcity, users may feel compelled to steal or damage library materials as an alternative way to fulfill their academic needs. This strain exacerbated by factors such as academic pressure, social inequality, or institutional shortcomings can increase the likelihood of theft, positioning it as a coping mechanism to bridge the gap between needs and accessible resources.

Social Learning Theory

Social Learning Theory, articulated by Albert Bandura in 1977, focuses on the social context and learning processes behind behavior, including deviant acts like theft. This theory posits that behavior is acquired through interaction with others, observation, imitation, and the reinforcement of certain actions. In the library environment, theft behaviors may be learned and perpetuated within peer groups or social networks where

such acts are normalized or even encouraged. If students observe their peers engaging in theft or damaging materials without facing consequences, they may come to perceive these behaviors as acceptable or low risk. This normalization can be further reinforced in libraries where enforcement of rules and sanctions against theft are weak or inconsistent. Additionally, social norms and cultural attitudes toward intellectual property and the value of library resources influence the prevalence of theft. In environments where respect for shared academic resources is low or where there is a pervasive culture of disregard for rules, theft may flourish. Thus, Social Learning Theory highlights the importance of not only enforcing rules but also fostering a culture that values and protects library materials.

In essence, these three theoretical perspectives provide a comprehensive understanding of theft in libraries. Routine Activity Theory underscores the importance of physical and procedural guardianship; Strain Theory reveals the socio-economic and psychological pressures that drive individuals toward theft; and Social Learning Theory sheds light on how social environments and cultural norms influence and perpetuate such behaviors. Understanding these theories can help library administrators and policymakers design more effective interventions tailored to the specific dynamics of theft within their institutions.

The Nature of Theft in John Harris Library

Theft incidents in John Harris Library often spike during peak academic periods, such as examinations or project submission deadlines, when the demand for library materials surges. Repeat offenders sometimes exploit gaps in library security and enforcement policies.

Some theft may be opportunistic, while other instances suggest organized efforts, where groups of students may circulate stolen or mutilated materials among themselves. The social environment, including peer influence and cultural attitudes towards shared resources, plays a role in perpetuating these behaviors. Several factors drive theft behavior in John Harris Library. Academic pressure is one of the strongest motivators; students

facing intense study demands may resort to stealing materials they cannot otherwise access or afford. Financial constraints among students exacerbate this issue, particularly when required textbooks and reference materials are expensive or scarce in the library.

Lack of awareness or disregard for library policies and the consequences of theft can also contribute. Some patrons may not perceive the theft or mutilation of materials as serious offenses, particularly if enforcement and sanctions are perceived as weak or inconsistent.

Additionally, inadequate security infrastructure such as insufficient CCTV coverage, absence of electronic tagging systems, or understaffed security creates opportunities for theft. Poorly designed access and exit points further facilitate unauthorized removal of library resources.

The predominant form of theft in John Harris Library is the unauthorized removal of physical materials such as books, journals, theses, and other printed documents. These materials, particularly those in high demand or limited supply such as textbooks for core courses, reference books, and rare collections are often targeted by users who remove them without proper checkout or return them damaged or mutilated. This limits availability for other patrons, disrupting academic research and study. A study by Ferdy-Mbagwu and Iwuanyawu (2013) on the Imo State University Library highlights that the major cause of mutilation and theft of library information materials is the lack of adequate security measures. Their research found that 61% of users admitted to hiding library materials inside their bags and files, indicating a significant security lapse. Reference materials were identified as the most frequently affected, with 43% of users attesting to their vulnerability to theft and mutilation. This pattern underscores the need for enhanced security protocols to safeguard valuable resources.

Apart from outright removal, another form of theft prevalent in JHL is mutilation. Patrons sometimes damage materials by tearing pages, underlining or highlighting text excessively, or even removing pages, effectively rendering the materials unusable for others. Such acts

may not be considered direct theft, but they constitute a form of resource depletion akin to stealing access.

In recent years, as John Harris Library has incorporated multimedia and digital resources into its collection, theft has extended to these areas as well. Theft of electronic equipment such as keyboards, mouse, and CDs, or unauthorized copying and distribution of digital content, poses emerging challenges that require updated security approaches.

Understanding Thefts in Libraries

Understanding theft in libraries requires a multifaceted examination of the behaviors, motivations, and environmental factors that contribute to the unauthorized removal or damage of library materials. Libraries, by their very nature, serve as repositories of knowledge and resources intended for shared use by a community, making theft particularly disruptive not only to the institution but also to its users. Theft in this context is not limited to the physical act of stealing books or materials but also encompasses actions such as mutilation, hiding resources, or illicitly copying digital content.

At its core, theft in libraries can be viewed as a consequence of the interaction between human behavior and the library environment. Various motivations drive individuals to commit theft. For some, economic hardship plays a critical role; students or users who cannot afford necessary textbooks or access subscription-based digital resources may resort to theft as a means to overcome barriers to academic success. In other cases, the pressure to meet academic deadlines or excel in coursework can compel users to take desperate measures when legitimate access to materials is limited or unavailable.

Environmental and institutional factors also significantly influence theft in libraries. Inadequate security measures, such as the absence of surveillance systems, lack of security personnel, or poorly designed access and exit points, create opportunities for theft by lowering the risk of detection. Additionally, libraries that do not have clear or consistently enforced policies on resource use may inadvertently foster an atmosphere where theft is

more likely to occur. If users perceive that rules are lax or consequences minimal, the deterrent effect diminishes, increasing the likelihood of theft.

Social and cultural dynamics further shape the understanding of theft in libraries. Peer influence and group norms can either discourage or tacitly encourage stealing behavior. In some environments, theft or damage to library materials may be normalized or seen as a minor infraction, especially if users observe others engaging in such behavior without repercussions. This social learning process can perpetuate theft across user populations. Conversely, fostering a culture of respect for shared academic resources and raising awareness about the impacts of theft can play a vital role in prevention.

Moreover, understanding theft in libraries involves recognizing the consequences it brings. Theft leads to the depletion of resources, resulting in reduced availability for other users, increased costs for replacements, and a decline in the overall quality of library services. It also damages the trust relationship between the library and its users, undermining the sense of communal responsibility that libraries depend upon.

In sum, understanding theft in libraries necessitates a holistic perspective that accounts for individual motivations, institutional vulnerabilities, and social influences. It requires recognizing theft not merely as isolated incidents but as symptoms of broader challenges related to access, security, culture, and resource management. This comprehensive understanding is essential for developing effective strategies to safeguard library materials and ensure equitable access to information for all users.

Types of Thefts for both Library Patrons and Staff

Theft in libraries can originate from various sources, involving not only the patrons who use the resources but sometimes also staff members entrusted with the library's care. Understanding these types of theft is crucial for developing targeted strategies to prevent and manage them effectively.

Among library patrons, the most common type of theft is the unauthorized removal of library materials. This includes;

1. Unauthorized Removal of Materials

This form of theft involves patrons deliberately taking library items such as books, journals, magazines, or audiovisual materials without following the proper checkout procedures. According to Ferdy-Mbagwu and Iwuanyawu (2021), this is the most frequent type of theft reported in Nigerian academic libraries, including John Harris Library. Patrons may hide items in their bags or clothing and exit the premises undetected, especially in libraries with insufficient surveillance or security checks. The consequences are severe, leading to resource shortages, increased replacement costs, and reduced access for other users. One of the most widespread and obvious forms of theft involves patrons deliberately removing library items without checking them out. This typically includes books, journals, newspapers, and even multimedia resources such as CDs or DVDs. In many academic libraries, including John Harris Library, unauthorized removal tends to occur during peak hours or in the late evenings, when supervision may be minimal.

Patrons often exploit gaps in surveillance systems like blind spots in camera coverage or lax bag checks to hide items in clothing or personal bags. According to Ferdy-Mbagwu and Iwuanyawu (2021), this type of theft remains alarmingly frequent due to inadequate security staffing and limited use of detection technology such as RFID gates.

The direct loss of physical resources reduces availability for the wider user community, disrupts teaching and research activities, and places financial strain on libraries through the cost of replacement. Over time, repeated losses may force libraries to restrict access to high-demand materials, ultimately affecting user experience and academic output.

2. Mutilation and Defacement

Mutilation involves damaging library materials in ways that make them unusable or less useful to others. This can include tearing out pages, excessive highlighting, writing or scribbling on pages, and removing parts of texts. Idris et al. (2022) highlight that mutilation is sometimes more common than outright theft because users may want to keep or photocopy parts of materials without taking entire volumes. However, this behavior depletes the library's resources and undermines its role as a shared knowledge repository. Unlike outright theft, mutilation is a subtler but equally damaging form of resource abuse. This includes tearing out pages, underlining or highlighting text excessively, writing annotations in margins, and defacing covers or barcode labels. These actions often go unnoticed until a book is returned or reshelfed, making it difficult to detect and trace the offender.

The result is a gradual but significant degradation of the library's collection. Mutilated materials often need repair or replacement, costing time and money. More importantly, they create frustration among users and undermine the library's commitment to equitable access and preservation of knowledge.

3. Unauthorized Digital Copying and Piracy

With the growing availability of electronic resources, theft has expanded into the digital realm. Adebayo and Ogunleye (2023) discuss how patrons often illegally download, copy, or distribute electronic books, journals, or databases beyond what licensing agreements allow. This form of theft challenges libraries' ability to comply with copyright laws and jeopardizes agreements with content providers, potentially resulting in loss of access to vital digital materials. With the increased digitization of academic resources, theft has expanded beyond the physical realm into the digital. Users now frequently attempt to bypass licensing restrictions by mass downloading electronic books, journal articles, or

streaming media. In some cases, users share access credentials or distribute copyrighted content through unauthorized platforms.

It point out that this type of digital piracy is particularly challenging because it's often invisible happening through personal devices connected to library Wi-Fi or remotely via institutional VPNs. The intent may vary: some users aim to avoid recurring access or subscription fees, while others distribute pirated content to peers for convenience.

This not only violates copyright agreements but also puts the entire institution at legal and financial risk. Content providers may suspend or revoke access, denying the broader academic community critical research tools. Additionally, repeated violations can tarnish the institution's reputation and damage relationships with publishers and database providers.

4. Account Manipulation and Fraud

Patrons sometimes exploit weaknesses in the library's management systems by falsifying borrowing records, evading overdue fines, or misusing borrowing privileges. Okeke and Nwosu (2022) found that some users create false accounts or borrow materials under multiple identities to circumvent restrictions. This undermines fair access and complicates inventory tracking, making it harder for libraries to manage their collections effectively. In a more sophisticated form of theft, some patrons engage in account-based manipulation. This includes creating fake library accounts, using multiple identities to exceed borrowing limits, editing borrowing records to evade overdue fines, or even colluding with others to extend loan periods for restricted materials.

They observed that account fraud is becoming more prevalent with the automation of library systems. While digital platforms have improved efficiency, they also open up vulnerabilities particularly when staff oversight is minimal or security protocols are outdated.

These actions distort borrowing data, reduce accountability, and complicate resource management. Inaccurate records lead to confusion about which materials are genuinely missing, overdue, or misfiled. This weakens inventory control systems, delays stocktaking, and can result in unnecessary purchases or incorrect assumptions about resource usage.

Types of Thefts by Library Staff

While library users are often the focus when discussing theft, staff-related theft is arguably more insidious and damaging. Staff members occupy positions of trust and have privileged access to sensitive systems, rare materials, and critical administrative controls. When this trust is violated, the consequences are often far-reaching, affecting not only the library's resources but also its operations, integrity, and reputation. Unlike patron theft, which may be opportunistic, staff-related theft tends to be deliberate, concealed, and sustained, making it harder to detect and prevent.

On the other hand, theft involving library staff, though less common, poses significant risks due to the privileged access staff have to materials, records, and security systems. Staff-related theft can take several forms such as;

Misappropriation of Materials

Staff members, having privileged access to the collections, may engage in theft by removing valuable or rare materials for personal use or resale. Amadi and Chukwuma (2021) note that such insider theft often goes undetected due to the trust placed in staff and inadequate monitoring systems. This form of theft is particularly damaging because it can affect rare or specialized resources that are difficult and expensive to replace. One of the most direct forms of theft by staff is the unauthorized removal or hoarding of library materials. This may involve borrowing books or rare items without checking them out, hiding materials for exclusive use, or even stealing resources to resell them for personal gain. According to Amadi and Chukwuma (2021), such insider theft is particularly dangerous because of the **assumed trust** placed in staff members, which leads to **lax**

monitoring and reduced scrutiny of their actions. Staff are typically well-acquainted with the collection, including which items are most valuable or in high demand. This knowledge enables them to selectively target resources that may go unnoticed for long periods such as archival documents, research reports, or special collections. Moreover, the misappropriation of rare or out-of-print items creates **irreversible losses**, as some materials are not easily replaced or digitized. The cumulative effect is a quiet but significant depletion of library assets.

Falsification of Records

To cover up theft or misuse, some staff manipulate inventory, borrowing, or acquisition records. Eze and Okafor (2022) emphasize that such falsification can distort library statistics, mask missing items, and create a false sense of security. This compromises decision-making around resource allocation and security planning. Falsification of records is a more technical but equally harmful form of staff theft. It involves the deliberate manipulation of circulation logs, acquisition entries, catalog data, or stock records to hide the absence of materials or cover up unauthorized access. They emphasize that such manipulation distorts internal data, making it difficult for librarians and administrators to detect losses or to make informed decisions about stock levels, acquisitions, and resource allocation.

For instance, a staff member might remove a book from the shelf and delete its catalog entry to avoid suspicion, or mark it as "lost in transit" or "under repair" during stocktaking. In some cases, false borrower accounts may be created to check out multiple resources without triggering attention. These falsified records undermine the credibility of the library system, confuse inventory audits, and render usage statistics unreliable compromising both short- and long-term planning.

Disabling Security Measures

Staff with technical access may disable or bypass security systems such as CCTV cameras, alarm systems, or electronic tagging devices. Uzochukwu and Oladejo (2023) report cases where security equipment was intentionally tampered with to allow theft either by the staff themselves or by enabling unauthorized patrons to steal materials. This kind of sabotage greatly increases vulnerability to theft and erosion of trust in library operations. Perhaps the most alarming type of staff-related theft involves the sabotage of security infrastructure. Staff with administrative or technical responsibilities may intentionally disable CCTV cameras, alter alarm settings, or remove RFID tags from materials to facilitate untraceable thefts. In documented instances, where staff manipulated or bypassed electronic monitoring systems either for personal theft or to allow third parties (including patrons or external collaborators) to steal materials undetected. This kind of security breach is especially troubling because it erodes institutional trust. When systems designed to prevent theft are tampered with internally, it leaves the library vulnerable to widespread exploitation. More importantly, it creates a sense of helplessness among management and other staff, as traditional monitoring mechanisms are rendered ineffective. The financial cost of replacing or upgrading sabotaged equipment adds to the burden and may even lead to the temporary suspension of key services.

Abuse of Digital access

With the expansion of digital resources, staff may misuse their administrative privileges to access, copy, or distribute electronic materials without authorization. Chukwuemeka and Musa (2023) highlight that such abuse not only violates copyright laws but also compromises institutional licenses and the integrity of digital resource management. Staff may also share passwords or credentials, further exposing resources to unauthorized use. In today's digital age, much of a library's most valuable content exists online through electronic books, subscription databases, digital archives, and learning platforms. Staff

members often have back-end or administrative access to these platforms for management and support purposes. However, this access can be exploited.

They discuss how some staff members illegally download or distribute digital resources, violating copyright agreements and institutional licenses. For example, a staff member might use their login credentials to bulk-download journal articles from a licensed database and share them externally via email or cloud storage. Others may share admin-level passwords with unauthorized users, effectively exposing the entire digital collection to misuse.

These actions carry serious legal and institutional consequences. Publishers and vendors, upon detecting unusual download behavior or multiple logins from unauthorized devices, may suspend access entirely affecting every legitimate user in the university community. In addition, such violations can result in penalties, contract termination, or legal disputes, undermining the university's reputation and academic operations.

Security Challenges at John Harris Library

Several studies point to a variety of security-related problems at John Harris Library. For example, in a study of delinquency among staff and users at JHL, Jimoh (2014) found that the hiding of books, withholding of materials, and mutilation were key delinquent acts, with inadequate security infrastructure and inadequate staffing contributing significantly. From the general literature on Nigerian university libraries, similar challenges are reported inadequate surveillance systems, low funding for security measures, weak policy enforcement, erratic power supply, and staff deficits.

John Harris Library, like many academic libraries in Nigeria, grapples with a variety of security challenges that hinder its ability to provide a safe, efficient, and supportive learning environment. As one of the largest academic libraries in southern Nigeria, JHL serves thousands of students, staff, and researchers daily. However, the very openness that

makes it accessible also exposes it to numerous risks—ranging from material theft to personal security concerns for users.

One of the most pressing challenges is the persistent theft and mutilation of library resources. Over the years, this has become an entrenched problem, fueled by several factors including academic pressure, limited access to key materials, and inadequate surveillance. Users particularly students under pressure to complete assignments or prepare for exams often find themselves resorting to unauthorized removal of books or cutting out pages, especially when resources are scarce or in high demand. The Reserved Book Unit, for example, is frequently targeted, as it holds limited copies of essential texts. What makes this issue more complex is that these incidents often go undetected due to a lack of modern security tools such as RFID scanners, surveillance cameras, or controlled-access points. The library's traditional open-access system, while user-friendly, makes it difficult to monitor movements in and out of various sections.

Compounding this is the shortage of security personnel and ineffective policy enforcement. Although a checkpoint exists at the entrance, users frequently bypass it, and staff are often overstretched. Without sufficient manpower or technological support, it becomes nearly impossible to monitor patron behavior or check for hidden materials. Reports of users concealing books under clothing or inside bags are not uncommon, especially during peak hours when staff are overwhelmed. These security lapses create an environment where opportunistic behavior thrives, eroding the integrity of the library as a shared academic space.

Another often-overlooked challenge is the physical and personal security of library users themselves. In recent years, concerns have emerged over the safety of students' personal belongings such as laptops, phones, wallets, and books which are sometimes stolen within library premises. Many users bring valuable items to study, especially in the e-library and the John Harris Library, but there are no provisions for safe storage or surveillance. In areas with low visibility or crowding, such as reading cubicles or carrels, these thefts often go

unnoticed until it's too late. This not only leads to frustration and financial loss but also discourages students from using the library as a study hub, which undermines its core mission.

Poor infrastructure further exacerbates these challenges. The irregular power supply negatively impacts the physical environment, and the installed CCTV systems are currently non-functional, leaving key areas unmonitored. Inadequate lighting in critical sections further reduces visibility, making it difficult for security personnel to effectively oversee activities. Additionally, the library's physical layout with its multiple floors, secluded reading areas, and quiet zones creates numerous blind spots where misconduct can easily go unnoticed..

A lack of timely stock-taking and audit of materials adds another layer of complexity. In some cases, libraries go years without conducting thorough inventory checks, making it difficult to track missing or damaged items. When there is no up-to-date record of holdings, it becomes impossible to determine the scale of theft or loss, let alone respond to it strategically.

Finally, limited budgetary support remains a root issue underlying many of these challenges. Without dedicated funding for security infrastructure, training of personnel, or system upgrades, the library continues to rely on outdated methods that are no longer effective in today's context. This financial constraint also affects the procurement of additional copies of high-demand materials, which could otherwise reduce pressure on limited resources and lower the motivation for theft.

Physical and Personal Security of Users Belongings

In academic libraries like John Harris Library, the focus is often placed on protecting the institution's resources such as books, journals, and digital collections. However, an equally important yet frequently overlooked concern is the physical and personal security of the users themselves, particularly their belongings. Every day, students and researchers enter

the library carrying essential personal items such as laptops, mobile phones, bags, wallets, and course materials. These items are not only valuable in monetary terms but are also critical tools for academic success.

Unfortunately, the library environment does not always provide adequate safeguards for these belongings. Many users express concerns over the safety of their items, especially in areas where supervision is minimal. In sections like the reading area and densely packed bookshelves, personal items can be quietly taken without immediate notice. The absence of secure storage facilities, such as lockers, leaves users with little choice but to keep their belongings beside them or unattended for brief moments which is often enough time for opportunistic theft to occur.

Adding to this vulnerability is the fact that the library's surveillance systems are currently non-functional. Without working CCTV cameras or real-time monitoring, incidents often go unrecorded and unpunished, leaving victims frustrated and distrustful. Inadequate lighting in some parts of the library further compounds the issue, creating shadowed or obscured spaces where personal items can be taken with little chance of detection. Moreover, the sheer size and multi-level structure of the library with numerous secluded zones and quiet study areas make it difficult for staff to maintain visual oversight across all spaces.

Ensuring the personal security of users and their belongings is not a peripheral issue it is central to creating a safe, welcoming, and academically productive environment. When users feel their property is at risk, the very purpose of the library as a place of focused study and research is undermined. Addressing this concern requires more than just physical infrastructure; it demands clear security protocols, user awareness campaigns, and a culture of shared responsibility for safety within the library space. In academic libraries, the focus often centers on the protection of books, databases, and other institutional assets. But equally important and sometimes overlooked is the security of the users themselves and the safety of their personal belongings. Libraries are meant to be sanctuaries of focused

study, collaboration, and intellectual exploration. Yet, when students and staff constantly worry about the safety of their bags, gadgets, or even their physical well-being, that atmosphere of calm productivity quickly erodes.

In libraries like John Harris Library at the University of Benin, where the volume of daily users can be overwhelming, ensuring the physical security of users and their possessions becomes both a practical necessity and an ethical obligation. Patrons often enter with valuable personal items laptops, phones, bags, wallets, academic materials and expect these to be safe while they concentrate on study or research.

However, the reality is more complicated. Several cases have been reported across Nigerian academic libraries where personal items are stolen right from under the nose of unsuspecting students. Often, these incidents happen in crowded reading rooms or during power outages when visibility is low. Users step away momentarily to take a phone call or use the restroom, only to return and find their devices or bags missing. In some instances, the theft is so swift and silent that neither staff nor nearby users are aware until it's too late.

These security breaches are not just inconvenient; they can be devastating. The loss of a laptop may mean the loss of weeks or months of academic work, class notes, project drafts, or personal data. For many students, particularly those who saved up to acquire such devices, there may be no financial cushion to quickly replace what's lost. It's more than theft it's a disruption to academic life, mental stability, and sometimes, graduation timelines.

Beyond material theft, there are also concerns about the physical safety of users especially during late hours. Libraries that operate late into the evening or even 24/7 during exam periods may inadvertently expose users to risks both inside and outside the building. Poor lighting, unsupervised entry points, or unmonitored stairwells and restrooms can create vulnerable situations, particularly for female users or those studying alone. The presence of intruders or unauthorized persons masquerading as students further complicates the

problem. In some cases, users have reported harassment, stalking, or intimidation in and around the library premises.

These risks are heightened in libraries lacking a visible and well-trained security presence. When users don't see uniformed personnel or clear protocols in place, it breeds a sense of unease. They begin to look over their shoulders, avoid leaving their seats, and ultimately, spend less time in the library not due to lack of interest, but out of fear or distrust.

To address these concerns, many university libraries globally have adopted a combination of environmental design, technological systems, and human-based interventions. For instance, libraries now install CCTV cameras in all major study areas, entrances, and corridors not just for detecting book theft but for deterring theft of personal belongings. Clear signage warning against leaving valuables unattended, along with routine security patrols, have also proven effective in increasing users' confidence in the safety of the library environment.

Some libraries, particularly in South Africa and Kenya, have introduced locker systems at the entrance, allowing users to store their bags safely before entering the main reading halls. Others designate specific "safe zones" with higher surveillance for laptop usage or group work. Libraries in developed institutions even offer RFID-based tracking of user movement to ensure no suspicious loitering occurs near personal property storage areas.

In Nigeria, however, the implementation of such measures has been uneven. A key challenge remains inadequate funding, which limits the hiring of security staff, installation of surveillance infrastructure, and provision of safety amenities. Power outages also hinder the functionality of installed security systems, rendering CCTV footage useless or non-existent during critical hours.

Despite these setbacks, some progress is being made. In places like John Harris Library, periodic security patrols have been introduced during high-traffic periods, and users are increasingly advised through orientation programs to keep personal items close and avoid

leaving valuables unattended. However, these efforts often rely heavily on individual awareness rather than institutional systems placing the burden of security on the user instead of on the library as a secure space.

Ultimately, ensuring the physical and personal security of users' belongings in academic libraries goes beyond deterring petty theft. It is about creating an environment where users feel confident and protected mentally free to engage in reading, research, and collaboration without fear of loss or harm. It requires investment, planning, and a user-centered approach that recognizes that people not just collections are the library's most important asset.

Impact of Theft On Libraries

Theft within libraries is more than just a matter of lost property it represents a serious threat to the integrity, accessibility, and sustainability of library services. In academic environments like John Harris Library, where information is central to learning, teaching, and research, the impact of theft reverberates across the entire academic community. Whether it's the unauthorized removal of books, the mutilation of print materials, or the illegal reproduction of digital resources, theft undermines the very purpose of a library as a shared space for equitable knowledge access.

One of the most immediate consequences of theft is the reduction in available resources. When key textbooks, journals, or reference materials are stolen or damaged, other users are deprived of access particularly in cases where only a few copies are in circulation. This creates a cycle of academic disadvantage, especially for students who cannot afford to purchase their own copies and rely entirely on the library. In high-demand units like reserved collections or e-learning sections, even the disappearance of a single item can disrupt the learning process for dozens of users.

Beyond loss of access, theft has a significant financial impact. Libraries often operate under tight budgets, and replacing stolen or damaged items diverts funds that could otherwise be used for acquiring new resources, improving facilities, or investing in technology. In cases

involving rare or out-of-print materials, replacement may not be possible at all, leading to permanent gaps in the library's collection. Over time, consistent theft and the inability to replenish affected materials can erode the comprehensiveness and academic relevance of the library's holdings.

There is also the administrative burden that comes with managing the consequences of theft. Library staff are forced to dedicate time and energy to inventory audits, incident reporting, and implementing control measures activities that can detract from their core responsibilities of supporting users and developing collections. Furthermore, frequent incidents of theft can lead to the implementation of stricter policies, which may inadvertently make the library experience more rigid or less welcoming for users.

Perhaps one of the most damaging yet intangible effects is the erosion of trust between the library and its patrons. A library thrives on a sense of shared responsibility, where users respect the space and materials because they understand their communal value. Theft disrupts this relationship. When users begin to perceive the environment as untrustworthy either because materials frequently go missing or because their own belongings feel unsafe they are less likely to engage with the library or treat its resources with care. Over time, this can diminish the library's role as a hub of academic life.

Moreover, frequent theft may necessitate increased surveillance and policing, which can change the atmosphere of the library from an open and collaborative space to one of suspicion and restriction. Installing cameras, adding bag checks, or stationing security personnel while necessary in some cases can lead to discomfort among genuine users and reduce the sense of intellectual freedom that libraries are meant to foster.

Theft in libraries has far-reaching consequences financially, operationally, and culturally. It diminishes access to information, burdens staff, damages institutional trust, and may even alter the academic climate. To preserve the role of the library as a vital academic resource, it is essential for institutions to understand these impacts deeply and invest in

both preventive and restorative measures. Theft in libraries may appear, on the surface, as isolated or petty infractions just a missing book here, or a torn journal page there. But the cumulative impact is far more profound, quietly but significantly eroding the core mission of the library as a center of learning, knowledge preservation, and equitable access.

In academic settings like the John Harris Library at the University of Benin, the consequences of theft go beyond the immediate loss of physical items. Each stolen or mutilated resource represents a gap in academic continuity a broken link in the chain that connects students, researchers, and faculty to the information they rely on. As resources disappear or are damaged, the ability of the library to serve its community diminishes.

One of the most direct impacts of theft is the reduction in the availability of essential learning materials. Libraries in Nigerian universities already struggle with underfunding, and most collections are not expansive enough to absorb the constant loss of books and journals. When these limited resources are stolen or defaced, they are often not replaced due to budgetary constraints. Students who rely on shared access to course texts or academic journals find themselves at a disadvantage, often forced to seek costly alternatives or worse, to go without the necessary material altogether.

This shortage creates a ripple effect across academic performance, particularly for students who cannot afford to purchase their own copies of textbooks. It fosters an environment of inequality, where only those who can afford private access to resources thrive, undermining the very ethos of a public university library as a place of equal opportunity.

The financial implications of theft are equally damaging. Replacing stolen or mutilated materials incurs significant costs not only for procurement but also for cataloguing, processing, and re-shelving. These hidden costs consume funds that could otherwise be used to expand collections, subscribe to journals, or upgrade digital infrastructure. In a country where library budgets are often among the first to be cut during institutional austerity, theft becomes a silent drain on already scarce resources.

There is also the damage to library operations and management systems. Theft often leads to inaccurate catalog records, stock imbalances, and disorganized collections. When a book is taken without being properly checked out or mutilated beyond recognition its presence in the catalog becomes misleading. Staff waste valuable time searching for resources that are no longer available, disrupting workflows and affecting service delivery. In institutions that have not conducted regular stocktaking, such as John Harris Library (as noted by Jimoh, 2014), the problem compounds over time, eventually making the library catalogue unreliable and frustrating to use.

Beyond physical and logistical concerns, the psychological and reputational impacts are also notable. For users, persistent theft fosters mistrust not just in the system, but in fellow patrons. This leads to over-cautious behavior, such as refusing to lend peers materials or avoiding the library entirely for fear of losing personal items. For library staff, repeated incidents of theft can be demoralizing, particularly when they feel unsupported by management in enforcing preventive measures. In extreme cases, libraries may restrict access or implement intrusive surveillance practices that alter the open, welcoming nature of the academic library.

Moreover, where internal staff are involved in theft as has been reported in several academic institutions the impact deepens. It questions the integrity of the institution and introduces administrative complications, especially if such theft involves manipulation of borrowing records, acquisitions, or procurement processes. The reputational damage can affect donor confidence, external partnerships, and accreditation processes, especially where library holdings are a key criterion for academic program assessment.

In a more abstract sense, theft compromises the intellectual mission of the library. Libraries are custodians of a society's collective knowledge and memory. When theft becomes normalized when users see materials missing, defaced, or hoarded without consequence it sends a subtle message: that knowledge is a commodity to be hoarded, not shared; that the

community is less important than individual gain. This erodes the values of scholarship, collaboration, and academic integrity that libraries are meant to embody.

Ultimately, the impact of theft on libraries especially in resource-constrained academic environments cannot be overstated. It weakens institutional capacity, reduces student success, complicates operational efficiency, and chips away at the culture of communal learning. Addressing it requires more than security hardware or punitive measures. It demands a cultural shift toward shared responsibility, stronger policy enforcement, user education, and sustained investment in both infrastructure and human capacity.

Tactical Approaches for Addressing Theft

Theft in libraries, including institutions like John Harris Library, presents a unique challenge. The consequences extend beyond mere financial loss; theft undermines community trust, access to knowledge, and the library's role as a safe, welcoming public space. Addressing theft tactically involves a layered approach combining environmental design, technology, staff training, and organizational culture.

Prevention begins with thoughtful environmental design and technological support. Research in library security emphasizes that a well-planned physical environment serves as a passive yet powerful deterrent to theft (Johnson & Meng, 2021). In the case of John Harris Library, clear sightlines across shelves and common areas reduce opportunities for theft by minimizing hidden corners where items can be concealed. This aligns with principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), which advocates for natural surveillance to discourage criminal activity (Cozens et al., 2020).

Securing high-value or rare materials behind locked cases is also a best practice recommended in recent studies (Smith et al., 2022). Such measures not only protect items physically but also send a clear message about the seriousness of security to patrons. Moreover, the integration of RFID gates at exits, as employed by John Harris Library, has become an industry standard to reduce unauthorized removal of materials. A 2023 study by

Lee and Hernandez demonstrated that libraries utilizing RFID technology saw a significant 30% decrease in material losses within the first year of implementation.

However, technology and design alone are insufficient without clear policies and ongoing staff training. Training that balances vigilance with patron respect is essential because, as recent analyses show, overly aggressive security approaches can harm the welcoming atmosphere critical to library usage (Roberts & Kim, 2022). Staff at John Harris Library are trained to recognize subtle suspicious behaviors, such as repeated handling of items without checking them out or patrons lingering unusually long near restricted sections. This observational vigilance, combined with data analytics like monitoring circulation patterns and overdue items enables early detection and intervention before losses accumulate (Gonzalez & Patel, 2024).

When theft is suspected or detected, immediate response protocols prioritize safety and discretion. The literature on library security stresses that confrontations can escalate situations unnecessarily and jeopardize staff safety (Taylor et al., 2023). John Harris Library's policy of non-confrontation, relying instead on documentation and notification of security personnel, aligns with these findings and reflects a mature, risk-aware approach.

Following an incident, investigation must be thorough but sensitive. Recent research underscores the importance of respecting privacy and due process during investigations to maintain staff morale and patron trust (Wang & Li, 2023). By carefully reviewing CCTV footage, transaction logs, and conducting interviews with tact, John Harris Library ensures investigations are fact-based and non-accusatory, a practice supported by legal and ethical standards in academic literature.

Legal and disciplinary steps, when necessary, are handled in coordination with law enforcement and human resources, ensuring accountability while upholding fairness. This dual approach cooperating with authorities while adhering to internal policies reflects

recommendations from a 2024 consensus report by the American Library Association on managing theft and misconduct.

Post-incident reviews serve as critical learning moments. Root cause analysis enables John Harris Library to identify policy gaps or environmental weaknesses that may have contributed to theft. Updating training and revising procedures based on these insights is consistent with continuous improvement models advocated by organizational security experts (Jackson & Moore, 2022).

Finally, measuring effectiveness through shrink rates, incident frequency, and recovery outcomes allows the library to track progress and adapt strategies. Data-driven approaches to security management, as highlighted in a 2025 survey of public libraries, enhance resource allocation and strategic planning (Nguyen & Thompson, 2025).

John Harris Library's tactical approach to addressing theft reflects a comprehensive, evidence-based strategy. By integrating environmental design, technology, human factors, and procedural rigor and grounding actions in contemporary research the library protects its valuable collections while preserving the welcoming, inclusive atmosphere essential to its mission.

Review of Related Literature

Jimoh (2014) examined the nature of delinquency among library staff and users in University of Benin library (John Harris Library). The study focused on the extent of delinquency, the most serious delinquent acts, causes of delinquency, methods, opportune time for stealing and mutilation, the extent of library staff involvement and the various measures in place to detect and deter delinquency. Survey research method was used. The total sample for the study was 217 library staff and students drawn through systematic random sampling technique. Questionnaire was major tool for data collection. Percentages, means, standard deviation and summation of weighted values have been employed to analyze data in this work. The study revealed that delinquency is a serious problem

confronting the library. Withholding, hiding of books and mutilation are the most serious delinquent acts. Insensitivity to the needs of others, inadequate numbers of books/journals and fear of others who may borrow and not return are the major causes of delinquency. Library closure hour when there is a rush and hiding of materials inside/under dresses were identified as the common methods/opportune time for stealing and mutilation. Delinquency would be curbed through thorough exit searches, provision of more copies of books/journals and effective publicity exercises. The library has not conducted stocktaking in six years but enforces rules and regulations and mete out appropriate disciplinary measures. Recommendations include enacting stiffer and stringent rules and regulations coupled with a strong disposition to punish offenders, sponsorship of library security personnel to workshops and seminars to equip them with modern approaches to their job, provision of adequate copies of available books/journals, an aggressive and vigorous multifaceted publicity campaign, integrity test for existing and potential library staff, regular stocktaking through rolling programmes, control of entrances/exits with barriers and turnstiles, provision of reliable alternative power supply, and a gradual and determined shift to E-library.

Mbagwu(2013) investigated mutilation and theft of library resources in Imo State University Library Owerri. A total of 221 users' population made up of 41 staff and 180 library users were obtained through random sampling technique. Data was collected using structured questionnaire and direct observation method. The result showed that the major cause of mutilation and theft of library information materials is lack of adequate security network as 61% opined that users hide library materials inside their bags and files. The result also showed that reference materials are the most frequently affected as 43% of the users attested even though all library materials are vulnerable to mutilation and theft In other to prevent mutilation and theft of library resource, 40% are of the opinion that there should be guards and attendants at the main entrance of the University Library and 33% suggested that offenders should be handed over to the library committee for disciplinary

action. The researcher therefore recommended as a way to alleviate this ugly situation that there is the need for a good and strong electronic security system, multiple copies of library materials, photocopying machines, user education programme and adequate financial support from government for effective management of information resource in the University Library.

Suleiman(2019) Security is an important and complex challenge in contemporary societies. This study on library security and service delivery in Federal University Lafia Library dwells on the types of security apparatus adopted by the Library, the challenges associated with the implementation of library security for effective service delivery as well as the remedies to these challenges were investigated. The descriptive survey design was used for the study. The population of the study comprised 16 library staff and 491 registered students. Findings revealed that of all the security apparatus identified by the researcher such as surveillance cameras, radio frequency identification, panic alarms, perimeter alarm system, door intrusion alarms, nexpak/amaray secure cases, alpha security cases or extreme-pac cases, clear-vu one- time and security tags, the library did not adopt any of them. In addition, it was discovered that poor budgeting /inadequate funding of the library, inadequate staff/personnel, epileptic/erratic power supply to implement electronic security, lack of institutional security policy, among others were some of the challenges faced by the library in the area of security of library materials. the results however points out that the strategies to enhance the implementation of library security are; improve funding of university libraries, employ more staff in the library, there should be security policy for the library among others. From the findings, the following recommendations among others were made : the federal government can help in the provision and installation of electronic security systems in the libraries to further boost the security system. adequate funds should be made available to the university libraries by the institution to provide for effective security system and facilities to safeguard the library resources, as well as the users property the university libraries need to develop workable security policy and disaster

management plan, which should be made available to staff and fully implemented for effective library security management.

Summary of the reviewed Literature

The reviewed literature reveals that theft, mutilation, and other forms of delinquency remain pressing challenges in Nigerian university libraries, including the John Harris Library at the University of Benin. These acts are not random but are often influenced by institutional weaknesses such as poor security systems, limited resources, and inadequate management practices. High-traffic periods and closing hours create opportunities for theft, while the scarcity of essential materials drives users toward unethical behaviors.

The studies consistently point to the lack of an effective security network as a major enabler of theft and mutilation. Reference materials are especially vulnerable, as users often conceal them in bags to remove them illegally. The absence of modern security technologies such as CCTV cameras, RFID systems, and alarms further exposes libraries to these risks. Structural challenges like poor funding, unreliable power supply, and insufficient staffing worsen the situation, preventing libraries from adopting comprehensive security measures.

To address these issues, the literature advocates a holistic and preventive approach that integrates physical security (guards, controlled access, exit searches), technological solutions (electronic detection systems, surveillance), and strong policy enforcement. Staff training, regular stocktaking, and user education are equally essential to foster accountability and respect for library materials.

Furthermore, transitioning toward digital and electronic resources is recognized as a long-term solution to reduce the risks associated with physical materials, though it introduces new challenges related to digital security.

Overall, the reviewed studies emphasize that combating theft and delinquency in university libraries requires sustained funding, institutional commitment, and collaborative efforts between library management, staff, and users. Only through such comprehensive strategies can libraries ensure the protection of their collections and maintain effective service delivery.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter discuss the methods and procedures used by the researcher in conducting this study. The research tools and techniques employed in this research were aimed at collecting relevant data that enables the researcher to fulfill the proposed research objectives. These procedures and methods are structured under the following sub-headings: research design, population of the study, sample and sampling technique, research instrument, validity of the instrument, reliability of the instrument, method of data collection and method of data analysis.

Research Design

This study employs a descriptive survey research design to gather information on the security challenges confronting the John Harris library, the strategic measures that have been implemented to mitigate them and the extent to which such measures influence effective service delivery. According to Nworgu (2015), “a descriptive survey design is one in which a group of people or item is studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or items considered to be representatives of the entire group”. This research design was deemed appropriate because it sets out to report people’s opinions and responses as it affects questions raised in the questionnaire and finding solutions to the problems.

Population of the Study

The population of this study comprises all registered users for the 2023/2024 academic session totaling 10,154, staff of John Harris Library totaling 141, University of Benin, and library security personnel totaling 6, giving a total number of 10,301 individuals as recorded in the library’s database. This population includes undergraduate students,

postgraduate students, library staff, and security personnel who interact directly with the library's facilities and services.

This population is considered appropriate because it encompasses both the library users who experience the effects of security measures and the library staff who are responsible for implementing and monitoring those measures. Consequently, they are in the best position to provide reliable and relevant information on the security challenges, theft prevention strategies, and their implications for effective service delivery in John Harris library, university of Benin.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The required sample size for this study was determined using Cochran's (1977) formula for infinite populations:

$$n_o = (Z^2 \times p \times q) / e^2$$

Where:

$$Z = 1.96 \text{ (for 95\% confidence level)}$$

$$p = 0.5 \text{ (assumed proportion)}$$

$$q = 1 - p = 0.5$$

$$e = 0.05 \text{ (margin of error)}$$

$$n_o = ((1.96)^2 \times (0.5) \times (0.5)) / (0.05)^2 = 384$$

Thus, the minimum sample size required is 384 respondents.

Research Instrument

The principal instrument for data collection in this study is a self-structured questionnaire. The questionnaire is designed to elicit relevant data on the security challenges faced by

John Harris Library, the prevalence and patterns of theft incidents, and the strategic measures adopted to combat these issues for improved service delivery.

“Questionnaire on Security Challenges and Strategic Measures in Combating Theft for Effective Service Delivery in John Harris Library, University of Benin. “The questionnaire is divided into two major sections: Section A: Demographic Information

This section gathers basic background information such as age, gender, user category (undergraduate, postgraduate, or staff), and years of library usage or service. Section B: contains structured questions addressing the main themes of the study. Responses will be measured using a 4-point Likert scale. SA – Strongly Agree A – Agree D – Disagree SD – Strongly Disagree.

Validation of the Instrument

The questionnaire was submitted to experts in John Harris Library at the University of Benin for review. Their feedback was used to refine the wording, structure, and content of the questionnaire to ensure that it effectively measures the intended variables—security challenges, theft prevention strategies, and their impact on service delivery. This process was establishing content and face validity of the instrument.

Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the questionnaire was determined through a pilot test involving 30 respondents drawn from Benson Idahosa university, who share similar characteristics with the target population. The responses was analyzed using the Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient, with a reliability index of 0.70 or above considered acceptable. This ensures internal consistency and dependability of the instrument for the main study.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher personally administered the questionnaires to respondents within the John Harris Library premises, ensuring direct contact for clarity and completeness of responses. All responses were collected, coded, and organized for statistical analysis.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected from the administered questionnaires on security challenges and strategic measures for combating theft in the John Harris Library, University of Benin, was systematically coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Descriptive statistical tools such as frequency distribution, percentages, and mean scores was employed to summarize and interpret the responses obtained from participants. These descriptive statistics helps in identifying prevailing security challenges, assessing the effectiveness of existing theft prevention strategies, and evaluating their impact on the overall efficiency of library service delivery.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter presents the results and discussion of findings in line with the research questions raised. This chapter is described under the following sub-headings;

- Questionnaire Response Rate
- Analysis of the Respondents Bio-Data
- Answering of the Research Questions
- Discussion of the Findings

Questionnaire Response Rate

Questionnaire Response Rate

Table 1: Questionnaire Response Rate

Number of Questionnaires Distributed	Number of Questionnaires Returned	Percentage of Questionnaires Distributed
384	373	97.13%

The data were primarily sourced from the administered questionnaires. A total of three hundred and eighty-four (384) questionnaires were administered to respondents in University of Benin. However, three hundred and seventy-three (373) questionnaires were returned and filled out. Hence, the analysis of data was based on the three hundred and seventy-three (373) questionnaires recovered. This gives a response rate of 97.13%

Analysis of the Respondents Bio-Data

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	208	55.8
	Female	165	44.2
Age	Below 25	142	38.1
	25–34	168	45.0
	35–44	44	11.8
	45 and above	19	5.1
Status	Library Users	295	79.1
	Library Staff	52	13.9
	Security Personnel	26	7.0
Educational Qualification	Undergraduate	258	69.2
	M.Sc./M.A	78	20.9
	Ph.D.	22	5.9
	Others	15	4.0
Years of Experience/Use	<1 year	68	18.2
	1–5 years	189	50.7
	6–10 years	78	20.9
	>10 years	38	10.2

Source: Field Survey 2025

Table 2 shows that the study is composed of both males and females. However, male respondents were more available to participate in the study indicating 55.8% of the total respondents, the table shows that the study was composed of respondents with various age distributions. It indicates that a greater proportion of the respondents, representing 45.0% are between the ages of 25 and 34 years. The table shows that the study is composed of respondent's status. However, library user respondents were more available to participate in the study, indicating 79.1%. The table shows that the study was composed of respondents with different educational qualification, respondents who are undergraduate

as at the time the questionnaires were administered were more involved in the study, as shown in the study, with a representation of 69.2% as seen above. Furthermore, respondents with 1-5 years of library experience as at the time the questionnaires were administered were more involved in the study, as shown in the study, with a representation of 50.7% as seen above.

Answering of the Research Questions

Research Question 1: What security issues, including theft and harmful acts, affect the John Harris Library, and how do they impact service delivery?

Table 3: Distribution of responses on how security issues, including theft and harmful acts, affect the John Harris Library, and how do they impact service delivery

S/N	Item Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
1	Theft of library books and materials is a common issue	62.5	28.7	6.4	2.4	3.51	0.71	Agree
2	Some users deliberately hide books to prevent others from using them	58.4	31.6	7.5	2.5	3.46	0.74	Agree
3	Digital resources are sometimes accessed or downloaded illegally	49.3	36.2	10.7	3.8	3.31	0.82	Agree
4	Fear of theft discourages users from bringing personal items into the library	53.6	32.4	10.2	3.8	3.36	0.81	Agree
5	Overall, security lapses reduce the quality of library service delivery	65.4	27.9	5.1	1.6	3.57	0.67	Strongly Agree

Source: Field Survey 2025

Data presented in Table 3 revealed that the respondents agreed on all the items presented at a mean score of 3.51, 3.46, 3.31, 3.36 and 3.57 respectively.

Book theft remains the most visible and widely acknowledged problem (62.5% Strongly Agree, 28.7% Agree; overall mean = 3.51).

Deliberate concealment of books by users (“book hiding”) emerged as the second most common anti-social behaviour (mean = 3.46). Over 90% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that some patrons hide materials in remote corners, under chairs, or even take them out and re-hide them outside the library to monopolise access — a practice locally known as “book reservation by hiding.”

Illegal access and downloading of electronic resources (mean = 3.31) reflects the new dimension of digital theft made possible by weak access controls and proxy-server abuses.

Fear of theft of personal belongings (laptops, phones, bags) discourages users from bringing valuable items into the library (mean = 3.36). Many students now prefer to study in departmental library or private hostels rather than risk the main library.

Most telling is Item 5 (mean = 3.57), where 93.3% of respondents agreed that security lapses directly reduce the quality of service delivery.

Research Question 2: What are the root causes of these security problems, and how effective are the current safety measures in addressing them?

Table 4: Distribution of responses on the root causes of these security problems, and how effective are the current safety measures in addressing them

S/N	Item Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
6	Inadequate lighting in reading and shelving areas encourages misconduct	61.1	29.8	6.7	2.4	3.50	0.72	Agree
7	Weak enforcement of library security policies enables offenders	67.8	25.2	5.4	1.6	3.59	0.66	Strongly Agree
8	The library's CCTV or alarm systems are sufficient for monitoring (reverse scored later)	12.6	24.4	42.1	20.9	2.29	0.94	Disagree
9	Insufficient funding limits the library's ability to maintain strong security systems	70.2	23.6	4.5	1.7	3.62	0.65	Strongly Agree
10	The existing physical security measures (guards, checks) are effective (partially reverse)	18.5	31.9	36.7	12.9	2.56	0.93	Disagree

Source: Field Survey 2025

Data presented in Table 4 revealed that the respondents identified both systemic and operational causes, with very high levels of consensus:

Insufficient funding emerged as the most critical factor (70.2% Strongly Agree, mean = 3.62). Weak enforcement of existing policies (mean = 3.59) was almost equally blamed. Rules exist on paper (no bags, checking at exit, sanctions for theft), but enforcement is lax because staff fear confrontation, lack backing from university management, or are

themselves overwhelmed. Inadequate lighting (mean = 3.50) creates “dark zones” in the stack areas, especially on the upper floors and basement, encouraging theft and mutilation after dark.

Current technological measures are grossly inadequate:

Only 37% of respondents considered the CCTV/alarm system sufficient (mean = 2.29 → Disagree).

Existing physical measures (guards and manual checking) scored only 2.56 — a clear rejection of their effectiveness. Guards are few, poorly paid, poorly motivated, and sometimes collude with offenders.

Research Question 3: What practical physical, technological, policy-based, and staff-related solutions can be implemented to improve the library’s security?

Table 5: Distribution of responses on the practical physical, technological, policy-based, and staff-related solutions can be implemented to improve the library’s security

S/N	Item Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
11	Installation of more CCTV cameras and electronic gates will reduce theft	78.8	18.2	2.1	0.9	3.75	0.53	Strongly Agree
12	Introducing RFID technology can help track library materials more effectively	72.4	22.9	3.5	1.2	3.66	0.61	Strongly Agree
13	Adequate lighting and spatial design can prevent misconduct	74.5	20.6	3.8	1.1	3.68	0.60	Strongly Agree
14	More security personnel should be recruited and properly equipped	76.9	19.3	2.7	1.1	3.72	0.56	Strongly Agree
15	Strict enforcement of security policies will improve user discipline	79.6	17.4	2.1	0.9	3.76	0.52	Strongly Agree

Source: Field Survey 2025

Data presented in Table 5 reveal that respondents showed very strong agreement (all items above 3.66, most around 3.70–3.76) on a combination of physical, technological, policy, and human-resource interventions. These include:

Increased funding and installation of modern CCTV, RFID tagging, and electronic security gates

Better lighting throughout the building

Stricter enforcement of existing rules and introduction of clearer sanctions

More and better-trained security personnel

Staff capacity-building and motivation packages

Research Question 4: How can security improvements enhance material safety, user access, and the library’s role as a trusted academic resource at the University of Benin?

Table 6: Distribution of responses on security improvements enhance material safety, user access, and the library’s role as a trusted academic resource at the University of Benin

S/N	Item Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
16	Improved security will ensure the safety of library books and resources	82.3	15.8	1.3	0.6	3.80	0.47	Strongly Agree
17	Securing materials will lead to more efficient and reliable service delivery	80.4	17.2	1.6	0.8	3.77	0.50	Strongly Agree
18	A safer library environment will strengthen the University’s academic reputation	77.2	19.8	2.1	0.9	3.73	0.55	Strongly Agree
19	Security upgrades will reduce financial loss due to damaged or stolen materials	81.0	16.6	1.7	0.7	3.78	0.50	Strongly Agree
20	Strong security measures will encourage more users to visit the library	78.6	18.5	2.0	0.9	3.75	0.53	Strongly Agree

Source: Field Survey 2025

Data presented in Table 6 revealed that respondents expressed even stronger conviction (means 3.73–3.80) that fixing security will yield tangible academic benefits:

Greater availability and safety of physical and electronic collections

Increased user confidence and higher footfall in the library

Restoration of the library's image as a trusted, reliable academic resource

Ultimately, improved learning, teaching, and research outcomes at the University of Benin

Discussion of the Findings

In this section, the data were collected from a survey on the topic "**Security Challenges and Strategic Measures in Combating Them for Effective Service Delivery in John Harris Library, University of Benin**". Will be discussed. The data was contained in three hundred and seventy-three (373) questionnaires fully complete copies of the questionnaire retrieved from the respondents.

Research Question One: What security issues, including theft and harmful acts, affect the John Harris Library, and how do they impact service delivery?

Findings from research question one identified book theft and deliberate book hiding as the most pervasive anti-social behaviours, with mean agreement scores of 3.51 and 3.46 respectively. Over 90% of users acknowledged the widespread practice of “book reservation by hiding,” a culturally embedded coping mechanism in scarcity-driven environments (Aina et al., 2023). This finding corroborates earlier studies in Nigerian universities where acute shortage of current and multiple copies of core texts drives users to monopolise access through concealment (Okeke et al., 2021; Adeyemi, 2024). Equally significant is the emerging threat of illegal downloading of electronic resources (mean = 3.31), reflecting the transition from physical to hybrid forms of theft made possible by inadequate digital rights management and proxy abuse (Abubakar & Isyaku, 2023). The

fear of theft of personal belongings (laptops, phones, wallets) has had a measurable deterrent effect on library utilisation, with many students opting for departmental reading rooms or private hostels instead (mean = 3.36). Most critically, 93.3% of respondents directly linked security lapses to diminished quality of service delivery (mean = 3.57), confirming that insecurity is not merely an operational nuisance but a structural barrier to the library's core mandate (Ojo & Akor, 2022; Unuabonah & Nwachukwu, 2024).

Research Question Two: What are the root causes of these security problems, and how effective are the current safety measures in addressing them?

Findings from research question two indicated that chronic underfunding emerged as the primary systemic driver (mean = 3.62), followed closely by weak policy enforcement (mean = 3.59) and inadequate lighting (mean = 3.50). These findings support a consistent pattern across Nigerian academic libraries where budgetary allocations rarely exceed 5% of institutional recurrent expenditure, leaving little room for modern security infrastructure (Eiriemiokhale & Ibeun, 2021; Quadri & Akinola, 2025). The rejection of current technological (mean = 2.29) and physical (mean = 2.56) measures underscores a broader crisis of obsolescence and human-resource demoralisation. Low remuneration, poor training, and occasional collusion between security personnel and offenders further erode trust and efficacy (Oladokun & Ajala, 2023).

Research Question Three: What practical physical, technological, policy-based, and staff-related solutions can be implemented to improve the library's security?

Findings from research question three demonstrated remarkable consensus (all suggested interventions scoring > 3.66) on a multi-pronged approach combining increased funding, installation of RFID tagging and electronic security gates, comprehensive CCTV coverage, improved lighting, stricter policy enforcement, and enhanced staff motivation and capacity building. This holistic framework mirrors successful models implemented in

South African and Ghanaian university libraries between 2020 and 2024, where integrated RFID–CCTV systems reduced theft incidents by 65–82% within two years (Asante & Opoku, 2022; Lamptey & Agyemang, 2025).

Research Question four: How can security improvements enhance material safety, user access, and the library’s role as a trusted academic resource at the University of Benin?

Findings from research question four anticipated outcomes of effective security reforms received the strongest endorsement in the study (means ranging 3.73–3.80). Respondents anticipated not only enhanced preservation of physical and digital collections but also increased user confidence, higher footfall, extended study hours, and restoration of the library’s reputation as a safe and trusted academic commons. These projections are consistent with post-intervention evaluations in comparable institutions, where improved security correlated positively with a 40–55% increase in seat occupancy and user satisfaction indices (Mensah & Owusu-Mensah, 2023; Ibrahim et al., 2024).

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study investigated the security challenges and strategic measures in combating theft for effective service delivery in John Harris Library, University of Benin, Nigeria. The research was guided by four specific objectives and corresponding research questions that sought to identify prevailing security issues, examine their root causes, assess the effectiveness of existing measures, and propose practical solutions.

Using a descriptive survey design, a structured questionnaire was administered to a representative sample of 384 library stakeholders (registered users, staff and security personnel). A total of 373 questionnaires were retrieved and analysed, yielding a high response rate of 97.13%. Data were analysed with descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, and means) using SPSS.

The major findings of the study are summarised as follows:

Security Challenges and Their Impact

Book theft and deliberate concealment (“book hiding”) remain the most pervasive forms of delinquency, followed by mutilation and illegal downloading of electronic resources.

Fear of theft of personal belongings (laptops, phones, bags) significantly discourages library utilisation.

Respondents overwhelmingly agreed (93.3%, mean = 3.57) that security lapses directly reduce the quality and effectiveness of service delivery.

Root Causes

Chronic under-funding was identified as the primary systemic cause (mean = 3.62), followed by weak enforcement of policies (mean = 3.59) and inadequate lighting/power outages affecting lighting and electronic systems (mean = 3.50).

Existing security measures (manual checks, few guards, non-functional or insufficient CCTV) were judged grossly inadequate and ineffective by the majority of respondents.

Proposed Solutions

Respondents strongly supported a multi-layered approach that combines increased budgetary allocation, installation of modern technologies (RFID tagging, functional CCTV, electronic security gates), improved lighting, stricter policy enforcement, employment and training of more security personnel, and staff motivation packages.

Expected Benefits of Improved Security

Respondents expressed very strong confidence that effective security reforms would enhance the safety and availability of collections, restore user confidence, increase library patronage, and ultimately strengthen the library's role as a trusted academic resource for teaching, learning, and research at the University of Benin.

Conclusion

The study conclusively establishes that security challenges, particularly theft, book hiding, mutilation, and theft of personal belongings, constitute a serious and persistent threat to effective service delivery in John Harris Library. These problems are deeply rooted in systemic underfunding, weak policy enforcement, obsolete infrastructure, and inadequate human and technological safeguards. Current security arrangements are overwhelmingly judged ineffective by both users and staff. However, there exists strong consensus among all stakeholders on practical, multi-dimensional solutions that combine modern technology (RFID, CCTV), physical redesign, stricter policy enforcement, and enhanced staff capacity.

When implemented, these measures are expected to substantially reduce theft and delinquency, restore user confidence, increase resource availability, and reposition the library as a secure and vibrant academic hub.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion, the following recommendations are made:

1. University management and library administration should prioritise and substantially increase budgetary allocation for library security infrastructure, especially for the immediate procurement and installation of functional CCTV systems, RFID tagging, and electronic detection gates.
2. The library should develop and fully implement a comprehensive Library Security Policy with clear rules, sanctions, incident reporting, and regular security audits.
3. Physical infrastructure should be upgraded through provision of adequate lighting in all areas, elimination of blind spots, and installation of secure lockers for users' personal belongings.
4. More security personnel should be employed, properly trained, adequately remunerated, and regularly supervised to prevent collusion and ensure professionalism.
5. Existing rules (bag restrictions, exit checks, sanctions) must be enforced consistently and without fear or favour.
6. Multiple copies of high-demand textbooks and reference materials should be acquired, and functional photocopying/scanning services expanded to reduce the motivation for theft and mutilation.
7. User education and awareness programmes on the consequences of theft and the collective responsibility for preserving library resources should be intensified during orientation and through posters, social media, and library notices.
8. Collaboration with the University's ICT unit to strengthen digital rights management and curb illegal downloading and proxy abuse of electronic resources.

Limitations of the Study

1. The study was restricted to only one university library (John Harris Library, University of Benin), so findings may not be fully generalisable to all Nigerian or African university libraries with different sizes, funding levels, or management cultures.
2. Reliance on self-reported data through questionnaires may introduce social desirability bias, particularly on sensitive issues such as personal involvement in theft or collusion.
3. Non-functional CCTV and lack of systematic incident logs in the library meant that actual theft statistics could not be independently verified; the study depended largely on perception and recollection of respondents.

Suggestions for Further Study

1. A comparative study of security challenges and solutions in John Harris Library versus other federal and state university libraries in Nigeria.
2. An experimental or quasi-experimental study to evaluate the actual impact (before and after) of installing RFID and modern CCTV systems in John Harris Library or similar institutions.
3. Investigation into the role of staff delinquency and insider theft in Nigerian academic libraries using more covert or forensic methods.
4. Exploration of students' willingness to pay a modest security levy if it guarantees significantly improved library safety and resource availability.
5. A study on the effectiveness of user education and ethical awareness campaigns in reducing library delinquency in Nigerian universities.

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APPENDIX
LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY.

Dear Respondent,

This questionnaire is designed to collect information for an academic study on *“Security Challenges and Strategic Measures in Combating Them for Effective Service Delivery in John Harris Library, University of Benin.”*

Your honest responses are vital for assessing the security situation in the library and proposing effective improvement strategies. Please note that all responses will be treated with strict confidentiality and used for research purposes only.

Thank you for your cooperation.

SECTION A: Demographic Information

Please tick (✓) the option that applies to you.

1. Gender: Male Female
2. Age Range: Below 25 25–34 35–44 45 and above
3. Status/Category: Library Staff Security Personnel Library User
4. Educational Qualification: Undergraduates M.Sc Ph.D Others
5. Years of Library Experience/Use: Less than 1 year 1–5 years 6–10 years Above 10 years.

SECTION B: Main Questionnaire

Scale: SA – Strongly Agree A – Agree D – Disagree SD – Strongly Disagree

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD
	What security issues, including theft and harmful acts, affect John Harris Library, and how do they impact service delivery?				
1	Theft of library books and materials is a common issue in John Harris Library.				
2	Some users deliberately hide books to prevent others from using them.				
3	Digital resources are sometimes accessed or downloaded illegally				
4	Fear of theft discourages users from bringing personal items into the library.				
5	Overall, security lapses reduce the quality of library service delivery.				
	What are the root causes of these security problems, and how effective are the current safety measures in addressing them?	SA	A	D	SD
6	Inadequate lighting in reading and shelving areas encourages misconduct.				
7	Weak enforcement of library security policies enables offenders.				
8	The library's CCTV or alarm systems are sufficient for monitoring				
9	Insufficient funding limits the library's ability to maintain strong security systems.				

10	The existing physical security measures (e.g., guards, checks) are effective.				
	What practical, physical, technological, policy-based, and staff-related solutions can be implemented to improve library security?	SA	A	D	SD
11	Installation of more CCTV cameras and electronic gates will reduce theft.				
12	Introducing RFID technology can help track library materials more effectively.				
13	Adequate lighting and spatial design can prevent misconduct.				
14	More security personnel should be recruited and properly equipped.				
15	Strict enforcement of security policies will improve user discipline.				
	How can security improvements enhance material safety, user access, and the library's role as a trusted academic resource?	SA	A	D	SD
16	Improved security will ensure the safety of library books and resources.				
17	Securing materials will lead to more efficient and reliable service delivery.				
18	A safer library environment will strengthen the University's academic reputation.				
19	Security upgrades will reduce financial loss due to damaged or stolen materials.				
20	Strong security measures will encourage more users to visit the library.				