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**NOISE MAKING IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN AKWA IBOM: STUDYING THE STRATEGIC STEPS TO MITIGATE NOISE FOR EFFECTIVE LEARNING**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study examines the issue of noise making in public libraries in Akwa Ibom State and investigates strategic steps that can be adopted to mitigate noise for effective learning. Public libraries are meant to provide a conducive and quiet environment for reading, research, and self-development, but increasing cases of noise disturbances have negatively affected their primary purpose. The study identifies the major sources of noise in libraries, including users' conversations, mobile phone interruptions, group discussions, and inadequate enforcement of library rules. It further explores the impact of noise on users' concentration, comprehension, and overall academic performance. The study adopts a descriptive approach in discussing practical strategies such as strict enforcement of library regulations, user orientation, zoning of library spaces, and use of signage, staff supervision, and incorporation of soundproofing measures. Findings suggest that effective implementation of these strategies will significantly reduce noise levels and enhance learning outcomes in public libraries. The study concluded that noise making in public libraries in Akwa Ibom State significantly undermines the purpose of libraries as quiet learning environments. The major causes of noise are largely behavioural, arising from poor user discipline and weak enforcement of library rules. One of the recommendations made was that library management should ensure that rules on silence are clearly stated and strictly enforced, with penalties for offenders.*

**KEYWORDS: Noise Making, Public Libraries, Akwa Ibom State, Effective Learning**

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**INTRODUCTION**

Public libraries serve as essential knowledge hubs that support education, research, and lifelong learning. They are designed to provide a quiet and orderly environment where users can read, study, and access information without distraction. However, in many public libraries in Akwa Ibom State, the problem of noise making has become a serious challenge affecting the effectiveness of library services.

Noise in libraries comes in various forms, including loud conversations, phone ringing, group discussions, and movement disturbances. However, "difficulty in accessing funds due to cumbersome processes, lack of support by university management are the major constraints to accessing intervention programme (Akwang, Udoh, & Obot, 2024), which may limit effective library management and contribute to challenges such as poor control of noise in library environments. The persistence of noise in public libraries raises concern about the effectiveness of library management strategies and the awareness level of users regarding acceptable behaviour. Therefore, there is a need to examine strategic steps that can be implemented to mitigate noise and restore libraries to their intended role as centres for quiet learning and intellectual development. However, "remuneration, though positively related, is not a strong determinant of Librarianship as choice to determine career choice in librarianship, but rather other professional and environmental factors play a more significant role.

### CONCEPT OF NOISE MAKING

The term "noise making" describes the production of unwanted, upsetting, or excessive sound that can disrupt regular activities like relaxation, work, communication, and general well-being. In environmental and health situations, noise is usually described by its subjective experience as unpleasant or disruptive, in addition to its intensity (measured in decibels). As noted by Basner (2020), noise is considered a significant environmental stressor that affects human health, particularly when it is chronic, unpredictable, or uncontrollable.

From a scientific standpoint, noise generation is caused by a variety of causes, such as industrial processes; urban expansion; social or recreational events; and transportation systems (road traffic, airplanes, and railroads). When these sounds go beyond accepted thresholds or cause disturbances to people or communities, they are referred to as "noise." According to Guski, Schreckenberger, and Schuemer (2020), environmental noise is closely linked to annoyance, sleep disturbance, and reduced quality of life, making it a major public health concern.

Noise production is frequently examined in the context of environmental contamination. According to the World Health Organization, one of the most significant environmental hazards to urban health is noise pollution. As highlighted by Münzel (2021), prolonged exposure to noise can lead to physiological and psychological effects such as hearing impairment, cardiovascular diseases, stress, and cognitive disruption. This emphasizes that noise production is a socio-environmental problem with serious health consequences in addition to being a physical reality.

### CONCEPT OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Public libraries are foundational community institutions established to provide free and equitable access to information, knowledge, and cultural resources for all



members of society. The concept of public libraries is rooted in the principles of intellectual freedom, lifelong learning, social inclusion, and democratic participation. Unlike private or specialized libraries, public libraries are funded primarily by government bodies and are designed to serve diverse populations regardless of age, socioeconomic status, education level, or background.

In modern culture, the idea of public libraries has expanded beyond the conventional function of lending books to include a variety of services that cater to communities' informational, educational, and social requirements. According to Aabø, Audunson, and Vårheim (2020), modern public libraries function as “low-intensive meeting places” that promote social cohesion and community engagement by providing safe, inclusive environments where individuals can interact, learn, and share ideas. This highlights the library’s role as a social infrastructure, not merely a repository of books.

Additionally, public libraries are becoming more widely acknowledged as important players in closing the digital divide. Libraries increasingly offer computers, internet services, digital literacy instruction, and online databases due to the quick development of digital technologies. As noted by Real, Bertot, and Jaeger (2020), public libraries play a crucial role in ensuring digital inclusion by offering free access to information and communication technologies, particularly for underserved populations. This reinforces their importance in supporting equitable access to knowledge in the digital age.

The educational role of public libraries is another crucial component of the idea. By offering resources including books, periodicals, multimedia materials, and educational programs, public libraries promote formal, nonformal, and informal learning. They support literacy development and lifelong learning by acting as supplementary establishments to colleges and universities. According to IFLA (2021), public libraries contribute significantly to achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in areas such as quality education, reduced inequalities, and sustainable communities.

## CONCEPT OF EFFECTIVE LEARNING

Effective learning is a deliberate and meaningful process through which individuals acquire, retain, and apply knowledge, skills, and attitudes in ways that promote long-term understanding and real-life application. It goes beyond rote memorization and emphasizes deep comprehension, critical thinking, and the ability to transfer learning to new contexts. In modern education, effective learning is considered learner-centered, active, and reflective in nature. Learning itself is commonly described as a relatively permanent change in knowledge or behavior resulting from experience. However, effective learning expands this definition by focusing on the quality of the

learning process and outcomes. It involves cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions that interact to enhance understanding and performance.

Active engagement is a key component of successful learning. Students must participate in meaningful activities like problem-solving, discussion, and reflection in order to use active learning methodologies. According to Sukrajh and Adefolalu (2021), active learning involves engaging students in activities that require them to think critically about what they are doing, thereby enhancing understanding and retention. As noted by Davis. (2024), the teacher's role is to facilitate learning by providing a variety of experiences. It goes without saying that educators should provide students the chance to experiment and gain new insights. This method differs from passive learning, in which pupils merely take in material without giving it much thought.

Constructivist philosophy, which holds that students actively create knowledge via interaction with their surroundings, is likewise intimately related to effective learning. According to Daodu. (2024), constructivist learning environments encourage exploration, collaboration, and critical thinking, making learning more meaningful and applicable. This method highlights that students are active participants in the learning process rather than passive recipients. Additionally, the fit between instructional strategies and learning preferences affects effective learning. Research by Urhievwejire. (2025) found that the interaction between instructional strategies and learners' preferences significantly affects academic achievement.

## **SERVICES OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES**

### **➤ Research supports and study space for student and scholars**

Study areas and research assistance are crucial services offered by public libraries to assist academics and students in obtaining trustworthy information and succeeding academically. These services include help finding books, journals, and electronic resources as well as advice on how to efficiently use databases, catalogues, and reference materials. As noted by Ibrahim (2020), public libraries strengthen academic research by providing structured support that enables users to identify credible sources and develop strong research skills.

### **➤ Access to computers, internet, and digital resources**

One important service that public libraries offer to help close the digital divide and facilitate information access for all users is computer, internet, and digital resource access. Through this service, community members, researchers, and students can utilize computers to access educational resources, type documents, and perform online research. As illustrated by Musa (2020), public libraries play a significant role in improving digital inclusion by providing free or low-cost access to ICT facilities, especially for individuals who cannot afford personal devices or internet subscriptions.

➤ **Educational workshops, seminars, and training sessions**

Training sessions, seminars, and educational workshops are crucial services provided by public libraries to encourage users' ongoing education and skill development. Numerous subjects are covered in these programs, including information literacy, computer skills, and academic writing, entrepreneurship, and literacy enhancement. According to Yusuf (2020), public libraries organize educational programs to enhance users' knowledge and equip them with practical skills that support academic success and personal development.

➤ **Reading and literacy programs for children and adults**

As noted by Okeke (2018), such programs help reduce illiteracy rates and improve learners' confidence in using language for communication and academic purposes. By offering educational resources, directing reading exercises, and developing engaging learning settings, librarians assist these programs.

• **Career and employment information services**

Public libraries play a crucial role in helping people access job-related resources and make well-informed career decisions by providing career and employment information services. These services include access to internet employment portals, career coaching resources, resume and CV writing help, and job vacancy listings. According to Okoye (2017), public libraries support job seekers by offering reliable and up-to-date employment information that enhances their chances of securing meaningful work.

## **EXTENT OF NOISE IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES**

According to studies, the amount of noise in public libraries varies greatly based on the layout of the space, the activity of the patrons, and the time of day. While collaborative zones and multimedia sections have moderate to high noise levels, silent reading rooms often retain relatively low levels. Many contemporary libraries describe a discernible change from quiet-only settings to mixed-use spaces, where noise is accepted in some places, according to Applegate (2020). This variation demonstrates that noise is localized in particular areas of the library rather than being evenly dispersed.

User perception and tolerance are two further aspects of noise levels. Some users, especially those who are reading or researching extensively, are quite sensitive to disruptions, while others can tolerate a modest amount of background noise. Research by Olatokun and Ajagbe (2022) shows that a significant proportion of library users in Nigeria perceive noise as a major barrier to effective study, especially when it exceeds acceptable levels. This suggests that even moderate noise can negatively affect user satisfaction and productivity.



The causes of noise in public libraries provide as more evidence of its scope. User chats, cell phone use, chair and table movement, and electronic device activation are common sources. Additionally, if library events and programming are not adequately managed, they may lead to increased noise levels. Zhang and Kang (2021) note that human activities are the primary contributors to indoor noise in public buildings, including libraries, and can significantly influence the acoustic environment.

## MITIGATING STRATEGIES TO NOISE MAKING IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Effective mitigation strategies are therefore crucial to maintaining a conducive environment for both quiet study and collaborative engagement. Noise in public libraries is a persistent challenge that can negatively affect users' concentration, learning, and overall satisfaction. As libraries evolve into multifunctional spaces that accommodate group discussions, digital activities, and community events, managing noise levels has become increasingly important.

- **Zoning and space design:** Zoning and space design are important tactics. Silent zones, quiet study places, and collaboration areas are examples of how public libraries might be organized. This spatial division lessens tensions between people who want to remain silent and those who are having conversations. It also helps control user expectations. According to Applegate (2020), clearly defined library zones significantly improve user satisfaction and minimize noise-related disturbances. The use of signage and floor plans can further reinforce these distinctions.
- **Use of soundproofing and acoustic materials:** Using acoustic materials and soundproofing is another successful strategy. Noise transmission in library areas can be decreased by using carpets, acoustic panels, ceiling tiles, and sound-absorbing furniture. These materials are being used more and more in contemporary architecture designs to regulate sound levels. A study by Zhang and Kang (2021) highlights that acoustic optimization in library buildings can significantly reduce ambient noise and improve users' comfort.
- **User education and awareness:** Play a vital part in controlling noise as well. Libraries should provide explicit guidelines for permissible noise levels and make them known via digital platforms, orientation programs, and signage. Promoting polite conduct among users cultivates a culture of silence and shared accountability. Olatokun and Ajagbe (2022) emphasize that user compliance with library rules is essential for maintaining a peaceful study environment.
- **Staff monitoring and enforcement:** Additionally, personnel enforcement and monitoring are required to guarantee that noise regulations are followed. Employees at libraries should receive training on how to handle noise-related problems in a courteous and efficient manner without disturbing patrons.



Frequent patrols and quick action can stop little disruptions from getting worse. Iwhiwhu and Okorodudu (2021) note that proactive staff involvement enhances discipline and promotes a conducive learning atmosphere.

## **NOISE CONTROL AND EFFECTIVE LEARNING IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES**

The control of sound and noise levels in public libraries is directly related to effective learning. Overwhelming noise can impair cognitive function, interfere with focus, and decrease comprehension. According to Kwon and Kim (2020), environmental noise significantly impacts users' ability to focus, especially in shared learning spaces, where distractions can hinder academic productivity. Their research highlights how reading comprehension and memory retention can be negatively impacted by even moderate background noise, especially for students and frequent library patrons.

Effective information dissemination is the transmission of relevant messages in the form of data, ideas, opinions, gestures and attitude from a sender to a receiver showing or stating the facts and objectives of the information (Kingsley & James, 2025), indicating that any form of disruption—whether environmental or communicative—can hinder access to information.

Public libraries are increasingly implementing zoning designs that divide social and collaborative spaces from quiet study rooms in order to address these issues. Libraries can accommodate a variety of user needs thanks to this spatial arrangement without sacrificing the learning environment. As noted by Applegate (2021), the implementation of designated silent zones, group discussion rooms, and flexible learning areas has proven effective in balancing noise levels while supporting different learning styles. These design techniques encourage effective use of library spaces and improve user pleasure.

Noise reduction is greatly aided by architectural and acoustic design in addition to spatial planning. Noise transmission in library buildings can be greatly decreased by using sound-absorbing materials like carpets, ceiling tiles, and acoustic panels. According to Abdullah, Rahman, and Aziz (2022), incorporating acoustic treatments in library design improves speech privacy and minimizes distractions, thereby creating a conducive atmosphere for learning their results demonstrate how well-planned acoustic spaces enhance user comfort and extend study time. Public libraries are managed by different categories of professionals with varying responsibilities. According to Obot, Bantai, & Jonah, (n.d.), Librarians may be categorized as public, school, special, independent or academic librarians. Some librarians are independent entrepreneurs working as information specialists, cataloguers, indexers, publishers and other professional specialized capacities. This diversity in professional roles highlights the structured nature of library management and the need for proper coordination of activities within library environments to ensure order and effective service delivery.



In public libraries, technology also helps to improve learning results and control noise. By warning users when noise levels surpass acceptable limits, real-time feedback tools and noise monitoring systems can assist in controlling sound levels. Additionally, the availability of specialized digital workstations and noise-cancelling headphones enables users to establish customized learning environments. As observed by Montgomery and Miller (2023), integrating smart technologies into library management systems enhances user experience and supports adaptive learning environments.

## CONCLUSION

The study concludes that noise making in public libraries in Akwa Ibom State significantly undermines the purpose of libraries as quiet learning environments. The major causes of noise are largely behavioural, arising from poor user discipline and weak enforcement of library rules. If not properly addressed, this challenge will continue to affect users' academic performance and reduce the effectiveness of library services. However, with proper management strategies such as strict rule enforcement, user education, environmental design improvements, and adequate staff supervision, noise levels can be significantly reduced, thereby improving the overall learning experience in public libraries.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Library management should ensure that rules on silence are clearly stated and strictly enforced, with penalties for offenders.
- Regular orientation programmes should be organized to educate users on acceptable behaviour and the importance of maintaining silence in the library.
- Libraries should be divided into silent zones and discussion areas to control where conversations are allowed.
- More library staff should be deployed to monitor users and promptly address noise-related disturbances



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