



Ethical misconduct among librarians in selected nursing training colleges in Ghana

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ABSTRACT

Every profession is guided by ethical conduct to help maintain the status quo of the profession. This study focused on assessing the ethical misconduct among librarians in selected nursing and midwifery training colleges in Ghana. The study adopted a qualitative research technique. Four head librarians were chosen using a purposive sampling approach each, from the three sectors demarcated by the researchers for the study. The findings from this study indicate that plagiarism is the most ethical misconduct librarians engage in, followed by violation of intellectual property rights and lack of access to information. The study also reveals that quick turnaround for searches, inadequate funds, ignorance of the code of ethics, and lack of education are the main causes of information ethical misconduct in librarianship. The study recommends that enough funding must be given to Nursing and Midwifery Training College (NMTC) libraries by management in order to equip them with the acquisition of legitimate materials to help curtail the violation of intellectual property rights and all other forms of ethical misconduct and dilemmas as a whole. Furthermore, the researchers propose that the Ghana Library Association which is the body responsible for librarians' interests should revise the 2014 Library Code of Ethics and urgently hold a seminar/workshop to refresh members' knowledge of the Code of Ethics.

Introduction

Ethics describes a set of standards of behavior that are accepted in relation to a specific group, culture, or class of human acts (Dutta, 2023). It ensures that an action that is designed to achieve a certain objective will do so without violating a value (Dadzie, 2011). Library and information workers, like all other professionals, desire to carry out their duties in an ethical manner. Nevertheless, they encounter numerous difficulties relating to the processing, preservation, and transmission of information in the course of their professional tasks (Hoq, 2012). For instance, a library may allow photocopying of whole documents even though it is illegal. They may develop policies that directly affect access to library materials or electronic access to information leading to censorship (Okafor, 2020). These scenarios force the library and information professionals to make ethical decisions. Currently, there are even more ethical issues as a result of greater internet use (Reidsma et al., 2023). For instance, the aspect of information security is increasingly one of the ethical concerns for librarians due to the difficulty of protecting electronic resources in libraries. It is obvious that without information security, library resources are vulnerable to both natural and

man-made disasters, which could jeopardize information management, information privacy, and data integrity (Afolayan, 2022). Additionally, the emergence of GhatGPT and other Artificial Intelligence (AI) applications has worsened the dilemma academic libraries face. For example, when using such an app, inaccurate or unjust results could be obtained because the model's answers might reflect the biases found in the training data. As a result, the library's goal of ensuring equal access to information may be undermined and may adversely affect marginalized groups more than others (Lund & Wang, 2023). Due to these moral conundrums, librarians are faced with the challenge of deciding how to proceed while juggling moral and ethical dilemmas.

The subject of ethical misconduct in the information profession has been examined in previous studies by Ferguson et al. (2016), Sturges (2009), Totolo (2015), Onoyeyan et al. (2014), Barfi (2017). Ferguson et al. (2016) are of the view that due to the tendencies of favoritism, nepotism, politics, and selfish ambition among others, information professionals may occasionally show greater commitment to their organization than to their profession. Their decision to act while being influenced by these factors ultimately compromises the moral principles of their profession and constitutes professional misconduct. Indeed, it is

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very easy for a librarian to find himself or herself in an ethical dilemma in this current day of various legal consequences over the supply of access to and use of information (Sturges, 2009). The frequency with which librarians and information professionals find themselves in an ethical quandary prompts the need for compliance with codes of ethics to assist them and guide them. Such misconducts include, but are not limited to plagiarism, conflict of interest, duplication, and fabrication among others (Barfi, 2017; Totolo, 2015). In the West African Region, Onoyeyan et al. (2014) for example assessed the ethical concerns faced by practicing librarians in selected universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. The research provided a lot of insight and focus on intellectual property rights, information accuracy, information privacy, and selection decision issues as the main ethical problems facing librarians, but its deafening silence on other serious ethical issues such as plagiarism, confidentiality, and many other ethical dilemmas confronting the modern librarian makes it imperative for reexamining of the context. Barfi (2017) on the other hand, examined the awareness of academic research ethics among senior librarians in selected polytechnics in Ghana. The study discovered that research ethical misconduct among senior polytechnic librarians was on the rise and that plagiarism, copyright abuse, fabrication, encroachment on privacy, poor record-keeping, and abuse of fair use policy were some of the common ethical misconducts. This current study seeks to ascertain whether librarians in nursing institutions in Ghana experience ethical misconduct on the job as no studies have as yet been identified from this cohort of librarians.

Nursing and Midwifery and Training Colleges (NMTCs) in Ghana have existed since 1928 (Akimuwi, 1995). However, several of them do not engage the services of professional librarians as they are diploma-awarding institutions. The disparity in remuneration between the degree-awarding institutions and the diploma-awarding institutions in Ghana remains unattractive for qualified information professionals in librarianship to work in that sector. For this reason, Heads of NMTCs are desperate to even engage the services of untrained librarians. Thus, an important subject such as ethical dilemma does mean a lot for both trained and untrained library staff who are manning the libraries of NMTCs.

The Government of Ghana has however, mooted the idea of migrating NMTCs into degree-awarding institutions and has started putting mechanisms in place to ensure a smooth transition to such status in the future. Consequently, the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) in anticipation of this migration, has made it mandatory for all NMTCs in Ghana to engage the services of professional librarians to manage their institution's library. This study explores how the few professionals in the NMTCs are conforming or not conforming to ethical practices in their institutions. Such research will fill the gap in the literature where virtually no studies have been identified. Furthermore, health training librarians are rarely considered in terms of academic research. Hence, another reason for choosing health training institution librarians in Ghana for the study.

On the contrary, it is worth noting that the nursing profession upholds its codes of ethics to a very high standard of compliance and even sanctions nurses who fail to comply (Griffith & Tengnah, 2020). The question that this study seeks to answer is whether librarians working in the nursing environment uphold their code of ethics by avoiding ethical misconduct.

Objectives of the study

The specific objectives of this study were to:

- i. Identify the components of information ethical misconduct among librarians in the Nursing and Midwifery Training Colleges in Ghana;
- ii. investigate the causes of ethical misconduct among librarians in the Nursing and Midwifery Training Colleges in Ghana;

- iii. propose strategies to address the challenges of ethical misconduct

Study setting

As of June 2022, Ghana had ninety-two (92) public nursing and midwifery training colleges spread throughout the sixteen regions in Ghana (NMC Web, 2023). These colleges are mandated to have institutional libraries manned by professional librarians to support the information needs of nurses studying mainly for the Registered General Nursing or Registered Midwifery courses. Unfortunately, some of these training colleges are yet to have the requisite trained manpower in place. The colleges under study have been grouped under three belts: Northern, Middle, and Southern belts. The Northern belt comprising regions of Upper West, Upper East, Savana, and Northern had twenty-three (23) public nursing and midwifery training institutions. The middle belt comprising Brong Ahafo, Ahafo, Bono East, Ashanti, Eastern, and Oti Regions had thirty-seven (37) public nursing and midwifery training institutions. The Southern belt comprising Western North, Western, Greater Accra, Central, and Volta regions had thirty-two (32) institutions. For this study, only four institutions were carefully selected from each belt making a total of twelve (12) institutions for the study. For this study, only four institutions were carefully selected from each belt, making twelve (12) institutions. The established institutions have professional librarians manning their libraries.

Literature review

Components of information ethical misconducts

An act is considered misconduct if objective evidence of fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, or other forms of misbehavior, such as authorship or conflicts of interest, is provided (Abdi et al., 2023). Several ethical misconducts have been cited by Nakitare and Otike (2023), Osuchukwu et al. (2022), Chepchirchir et al. (2020), Davoudi et al. (2018), Morrison and Secker (2017), Matingwina (2015), McMenemy (2007). It is interesting to note that McMenemy (2007) blames the rise in ethical misconduct in librarianship and the information profession on issues of copyright issues, censorship, and plagiarism. Ignorance of copyright laws is also supported by Osuchukwu et al. (2022) who indicates that the latter is a relative issue that can cause significant harm to all stakeholders in the publishing and academic industries. The issues of censorship and freedom to access knowledge as ethical problems have plagued the profession of librarianship since the idea of ethics was adopted and was cited by Matingwina (2015). Censorship refers to a change in the access status of material made by a governing authority or its representatives based on the content of the work. Exclusion, restriction, removal, or changes in age/grade level are examples of such adjustments (ALA, 2016). Another important misconduct is the infringement of intellectual property rights as mentioned by Dunmade and Tella (2023), Chepchirchir et al. (2020) and Field (2006). Protecting and preserving intellectual property rights are necessary for upholding the ethics of the profession. However, as the world becomes more digitized, securing intellectual property and ensuring ethical technology use has become a major problem for university libraries in Nigeria (Dutta, 2023; Fadehan & Okiki, 2023; Masenya, 2023). Nevertheless, as observed by Chepchirchir et al. (2020) infringing on intellectual property through the creation, replication, sale, infringement, falsification, or claim of ownership of intellectual property is, in general, considered a violation of the rights of the rightsholder. One of the most common ethical misconduct is also cited in the literature and has to do with plagiarism which some scholars like Nakitare and Otike (2023), Fadlalmola et al. (2022), Fishman (2018), Barfi (2017), Louw (2017) and identified in their study. Plagiarism is the appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and thinking of another author and presenting them as one's original work (Fadlalmola et al., 2022). Other ethical misconducts include violation of privacy Hunt et al. (2023), and Zwass

(2012), indicate that individuals have the right to privacy, which is the ability to keep information about themselves private and to have any information about them that has been gathered with their consent safeguarded from unauthorized access. However, our existing choices indicate that we value delivering material and gathering statistics to demonstrate how valuable we are considerably more than we value protecting the information of our patrons (Farkas, 2022).

Causes of ethical misconduct

Several authors have investigated the causes of ethical misconduct among librarians. Some of them include a lack of awareness about ethics, ignorance of the codes of ethics, and lack of access to information among others.

i. Lack of knowledge of the code of ethics

Although some studies have indicated that librarians were aware of the existence of the code of ethics, a few of them were not aware at all. Studies by Hoffman (2005) and Onoyeyan et al. (2014) have revealed that the majority of librarians were aware of the Librarians' codes of ethics. Hoffman (2005), on professional ethics and librarianship within the Texas Library Association (TLA), found that a little over two-thirds of members (68 %) were aware that TLA had a Code of Ethics. Thirty-four (34 %) of the respondents indicated that they kept a copy of the code in their professional workspace. However, members with 6–10 years of work experience were the least aware of the ALA code of ethics with only 14 % of that group reporting they were aware of the code. Similarly, a study by Onoyeyan et al. (2014) revealed that 93.2 % of practicing librarians in Ogun state were aware that librarians had a code of ethics. Only a few did not know about the code of ethics for librarians. While 40.9 % of librarians had copies of the Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) Code of Ethics, 52.3 % did not have and 6.8 % did not indicate whether they had or not.

Sakyi and Bawole (2009) found that the problems limiting the successful application of codes of ethics in different countries included organizational culture, inadequate oversight and monitoring, and excessive societal pressure on bureaucrats. Additionally, Helin and Sandström (2008), in their study on the cross-cultural differences between adherence to and implementation of codes of ethics, found that implementation was impeded when the content of codes was unclear and ambiguous.

ii. Plagiarism

Plagiarism has been identified in the literature as one of the major ethical causes of misconduct (Barfi, 2017; Louw, 2017). Findings from Louw (2017) revealed that the majority of students' work was plagiarized according to 21 % of the professors surveyed while 15 % of them claimed that all of their students regularly plagiarize. This was from the survey in which staff members and students of the Potchefstroom campus of the North-West University Campus, South Africa were investigated. Plagiarism involves the use of other people's works without appropriate reference to them. Students attributed this behavior to a lack of comprehension of their work well enough to make their own opinions to write material in their own words. Similar results of plagiarism were also reported by Barfi (2017) when she examined the awareness of academic research ethics among senior librarians in selected polytechnics in Ghana. The majority of senior librarians (88.8 %) strongly believed that plagiarism was the most common type of academic misconduct. This was followed by other misconducts such as academic dishonesty (66.6 %), data manipulation (59.2 %), fabrication (51.8), and invasion of privacy (48.1 %). However, ethical misconduct such as honorary authorship, conflicts of interest, ghostwriting, and salami publications garnered little knowledge from the respondents while data insecurity, social network abuse, and e-waste were among the other crimes that were exposed.

iii. Violation of intellectual property rights

In a study by Onoyeyan et al. (2014), they observed that violation of intellectual property rights was one of the biggest challenges facing

librarians in Nigeria's Ogun State's federal, state, and private colleges. Fifty (50) professional librarians from the Federal University of Agriculture (FUNAAB), Abeokuta, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, and Babcock University, IlishanRemo were surveyed and the findings revealed that issues of intellectual property rights were the biggest ethical challenge facing librarians, receiving a response rate of 27.1 %. Information Accuracy received response rates of 24.7 % and selection decisions of 24.7 %, respectively. The study also demonstrated that, with a response rate of 21.5 %, practicing librarians view the misuse of private information and the use of their positions of authority for personal gain as unethical behavior. Furthermore, the study revealed that utilizing one's position of authority for personal gain and abusing confidential information were both seen as highly unethical behavior among librarians.

iv. Lack of access to information

Findings from Matinwina's (2015) study revealed that the two most common ethical problems facing information workers in Zimbabwe were those of fair access to library resources (94 %), and preservation of individual privacy and confidentiality (94 %). Fifty-eight (58) LIS professionals were surveyed and other findings showed that (78 %) of respondents cited a lack of regional policies as a problem in the application of ethical standards. It was fascinating to see more than half of the respondents (64 %) responded when asked about intellectual property protection as an ethical concern. Conflicting interests among important information stakeholders, a scarcity of reading resources, and the complexity of ethical rules were a few more notable problems.

v. Other ethical misconducts

Other ethical misconducts are censorship, lack of knowledge of copyright laws, patron privacy problems, staff problems, computer use/Internet filtering problems, and sexual harassment (Hoffman, 2005). Hoffman (2005) in his study on ethical dilemmas experienced by librarians in Texas mentioned that a little over one-third (37 %) of respondents stated that they had faced an ethical conundrum while working as a librarian, administrator, or teacher. The likelihood of having faced an ethical problem was highest among those with the most job experience (45 % with more than 21 years of experience). Thirty-nine (39 %) of individuals said they had faced an ethical conundrum at work in school libraries, thirty-four (34 %) in public libraries, and sixteen (16 %) in academic libraries. Only 12 % of individuals who said they had encountered an ethical dilemma at work said they afterward regretted their choice of action or inactivity. In addition, twenty-three (23 %) of the respondents said that they had been instructed to perform something that they believed to be unethical by a supervisor.

Strategies to address challenges of ethical misconduct

Strategies to address ethical misconduct challenges highlighted in the literature include awareness creation through education and training, workshops and seminars, and orientations among others. For instance, students of the Potchefstroom campus of the North-West University Campus, South Africa in South Africa indicated that they plagiarized due to a lack of comprehension of their work to write materials in their own words (Louw, 2017). Additionally, Oladinrin and Ho (2015) attributed it to insufficient ethics education as well as a lack of clarity in the code of ethics. Furthermore, posit that organizations must establish a set of values and ensure that these are applied consistently in the workplace while the lack of clarity and ambiguity in the code of ethics is also supported by Helin and Sandström (2008).

Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative research design for this study. Out of 92 institutional heads of libraries in the Nursing and Midwifery colleges in Ghana, a total of twelve (12) professional librarians were chosen from the three (3) belts, namely the northern, middle, and southern belts. The northern belt comprised nursing and midwifery colleges in Upper West,

Upper East, Savana, and Northern regions which had twenty-three (23) public nursing and midwifery training institutions, and four (4) institutions were chosen from this belt. Similarly, the middle belt comprising Brong Ahafo, Ahafo, Bono East, Ashanti, Eastern, and Oti Regions had thirty-seven (37) public nursing and midwifery training institutions and four of the colleges were selected for the study. The Southern belt comprising Western North, Western, Greater Accra, Central, and Volta regions had thirty-two (32) institutions and similarly, four of their institutions were included in the study. Thus, a total of twelve (12) NMTCs were selected for this study. The reasons for the selection of the four institutions were their year of establishment (the oldest being selected), the state-of-the-art of their libraries, and the professional qualifications of their librarians. The head librarian for each of the chosen NMTCs was represented anonymously according to belts as Northern Belt: NMTC 1,...NMTC 4, Middle Belt: NMTC 5,..... NMTC 8, Southern Belt NMTC 9,.....NMTC 12 respectively.

Sampling

The study employed a purposive sampling technique. The head librarians in the NMTCs were purposively sampled. The reason for purposively sampling the head librarians was that they were the managers of information for the institutions and they had the exact information needed for the study.

Interviews

The interview questions were based mainly on the three objectives of the study. A semi-structured interview was employed to collect the data to carry out the goals of this study. The researchers contacted the respondents by phone to fix appropriate dates for the face-to-face interviews to be conducted. These were carried out over three weeks as some respondents had to reschedule the dates earlier agreed upon. The interviews lasted between 20 and 30 min. The researchers later sent the transcript of the interview to the respondents for confirmation. The interviews were analyzed manually using content analysis with the procedure discussed by [Vaismoradi et al. \(2016\)](#); and [Wargo \(2013\)](#). Thus, the repetitive responses served as a major theme in analyzing the data. Respondents were anonymously represented as NMTC1, NMTC2, NMTC3,..NMTC12 respectively by the ethical agreement with the librarians.

Findings

The major ethical misconducts that were identified by the authors through the data gathered on the field were: Plagiarism, Violation of intellectual property rights, and Lack of access to information.

The researchers explained to the respondents what ethical misconduct means and provided examples of ethical misconduct as censorship, plagiarism, not giving people privacy or confidentiality in accessing information, lack of right to access information, intellectual property rights, etc. The researchers then asked the question “*In your opinion what ethical misconducts do most librarians often engage in?*” The majority of the respondents mentioned plagiarism and lack of access to legitimate information as the most ethical misconduct that librarians engage in. Some also mentioned censorship while a few of the respondents mentioned intellectual property rights and breach of privacy.

1.1 Plagiarism

The reason given for such misconduct was that users gave priority to the information that they were seeking but not the source of the information. This, therefore, caused them (Librarians) to pay minimal attention to referencing the source of information they were giving to their clients. Below are some responses from four of the participants that depict that plagiarism was the most ethical misconduct that most

librarians engaged in:

Theme	Responses
Plagiarism	<p>NMTC6- that should be plagiarism, intellectual property right, and the right to access information</p> <p>NMTC10 - Plagiarism. Because when someone comes to me and says he/she wants information, I search for the book or go online to look for such information for the person without even citing or acknowledging the source of the library.</p> <p>NMTC11- Plagiarism. Patrons are not exposed to information sources. So, some librarians also refuse to acknowledge the source of the information given to them.</p> <p>NMTC12- Plagiarism. We are in academia, so people get people’s information without acknowledging the source.</p>

1.2 Violation of intellectual property right

Violation of intellectual property rights was the next item of ethical misconduct that was mentioned by many respondents. For example, activities like extensive photocopying of a whole textbook and indiscriminate scanning of library materials as a result of the unavailability of content needed to serve clients were admitted by most librarians as something they often engaged in.

The researchers probed further to find out why the respondents engaged in such acts. Respondents indicated the following:

Theme	Response
Violation of intellectual Property rights	<p>NMTC1- because there are no funds for me to purchase all the information materials that my patron needs. So sometimes I am torn between serving them and violating their intellectual property rights. So, I see the “lesser evil” of violating intellectual property because they would not even know.</p> <p>NMTC6- We are desperate to satisfy our clients so it pushes us to some extent to use the back door to get some information to make it available for the clients.</p>

1.3 Lack of access to information

Upon further scrutiny by the researchers to find out why they did that some of the respondents opined that, they engaged in such misconduct because of inadequate library resources. For example, a patron requests material that has either been borrowed or may not be in the collection of the library at all. They further explained that under such circumstances, it meant access to information was denied, and there was little they could do even though it went contrary to the library code of ethics. On the other hand, a respondent stated that he deliberately denies some users access to the information available in the library by discriminating against users based on tribal sentiments and gender. As stated by NMTC5:

Theme	Response
Lack of access to information	<p>NMTC3- “Sometimes I don’t give library users the right information. I do discriminate among students. When some come to borrow a book, I give them some conditions that are favorable to them but to others, I give them conditions that are not favorable to them. Sometimes too, I don’t give some users the right information. Discrimination is done through tribalism or the behavior of the user. Others too is based on gender. Thus, when a female comes to ask for information in the library, I give the right information but when a male comes, I give him the wrong information. I consider the kind of relationship I can get from the female to which I cannot get access with the male”.</p>

A follow-up question was “*Why do most librarians engage in ethical misconduct?*”. There were varied views proffered but the majority of them said that they did so due to the need to quickly search to satisfy patrons’ needs.

Additionally, some respondents attributed their engagement in ethical misconduct to selection decisions. NMTC4, NMTC9, and NMTC3 felt obliged to provide the right information when their users demanded

the information.

Theme	Responses
Selection decision	<p>NMTC4- I'm saying a selection decision because a client may come to the library and may want information. I must provide information for the user so in this case, I have to look for the information which is accurate for the person. In doing so, I have to decide on the information which will be very accurate for the person and that is a difficult thing to do within that short time.</p> <p>NMTC9- Because at times students come to the library to ask for material that we don't have, so we have to provide different material from our selections.</p> <p>NMTC3- This is because most of the library books are old editions and the concern is the mode of health care keeps changing. So I am always torn between giving patrons the old edition of books or downloading the latest edition from the internet.-</p>

2.1 Quick turn- around for searches
As declared by NMTC6 and NMTC7

Theme	Response
Quick turn- around for searches	<p>NMTC6- As librarians, our existence is to provide information to our clients. So in our quest to satisfy or to meet the information needs of the patrons, we end up giving out information without recourse to plagiarism checks or guidelines in using other people's work. So many times, we are guilty and I happen to be one of them.</p> <p>NMTC7- As you know, our libraries are small and our books are two or three to the title. We don't have enough time to check for intellectual property rights. So sometimes we give it to students to make photocopies which I think breaches intellectual property rights.</p>

2.2 Inadequate funds

The majority of the respondents also admitted that inadequate fund was the root cause for their engaging in ethical misconduct. One of the respondents was categorical about the fact that inadequate funds led to librarians engaging in almost all the ethical misconduct mentioned above.

He stated it categorically as:

Theme	Responses
Inadequate funds	<p>NMTC4- We all bear witness to the fact that the budget for NMTC's libraries is meager. Management sometimes feels reluctant to release funds for library activities and NMTC libraries as we know to operate in a small space. So because they are operating in a confined space, there are not enough offices for staff. A chunk of the librarians end up using the open space as their office. Due to this, a patron who wishes to request or seek information from you privately ends up having another user of the library know what he/she is requesting. This, therefore, leads to the violation of privacy for library users.</p> <p>NMTC1- lack of funds leads to the violation of the intellectual property rights of authors or editors. Because, if you do not have enough funds to purchase the books to serve your patrons, you just have to download one or two which you access online to print and serve your patrons.</p>

2.3 Ignorance of the code of ethics and lack of education among librarians

Most of the respondents apportioned blame for ethical misconducts they engaged in as librarians due to ignorance of the code of ethics and lack of education among librarians. Through the analysis of the data gathered from the field, even though some were aware of the existence of the code of ethics, they did not know what it entailed. These were some of the respondents.

Theme	Responses
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Theme	Responses
Ignorance of the code of ethics and lack of education	<p>NMTC5- Some librarians engage in this practice because they are not aware of the code of ethics or they don't read further.</p> <p>NMTC9- Ignorance on the part of librarians regarding the existence of a library code of ethics causes most librarians to engage in ethical misconduct.</p> <p>NMTC11- I feel some librarians are not aware of the existence of the code of ethics. So, to me is a lack of education.</p> <p>NMTC4- Most of the NMTCs do not have a professionally trained librarian. So they don't even know that there is something called a code of ethics existing in librarianship and to even talk about its compliance.</p>

However, as the issue of ethical misconduct became so interesting between the various respondents and the researchers, the researchers narrowed it down to the respondents themselves by asking them whether they engaged in ethical misconduct. The respondents were so sincere as the overwhelming majority of them said that they had in one way or another indulged themselves in an ethical misconduct act before in their line of duty as librarians. While a few of them said "No" those who said "Yes" were asked a follow-up question that sought to find out which type of ethical misconduct they were involved in and why. Overall, the majority mentioned plagiarism.

Strategies to address challenges of ethical misconduct

Respondents were also asked to indicate how they would be able to address the challenges of ethical misconduct among librarians. Most of them indicated education and training, especially by the Ghana Library Association, and employment of professional librarians as suggested by NMTC12:

Theme	Responses
Strategies to address Challenges of Ethical Misconduct	<p>NMTC7- ethical misconduct among librarians is a result of inadequate library resources, so NMTCs should devote enough funds in order for the libraries to acquire enough resources both print and electronic materials to discourage the act of violating intellectual property rights and other forms of ethical misconduct.</p> <p>NMTC12- In fact, the majority of the NMTC librarians are not professional enough to understand censorship, the essence of protecting intellectual property rights, etc. so I suggest that it should be mandatory for NMTCs to employ professionals to man their libraries.</p> <p>NMTC2- I think the NMTC management should develop an interest in understanding the library profession and its system as a whole. This would enable librarians of the various NMTCs not to struggle to acquire the needed materials requested for their work.</p> <p>NMTC4- Looking at the economic status of the country, it would be impossible for all the NMTCs to provide their libraries with all the resource needs. So, I think librarians should come together and share information among libraries to cut down the cost of acquiring information resources.</p>

Discussion of findings

One of the findings of this research reveals that some of the most frequent ethical transgressions include plagiarism which corroborates with Nakitare and Otikey (2023), Fadlalmola et al. (2022); Osuchukwu

et al. (2022); Barfi (2017), and Louw (2017). Osuchukwu et al. (2022), in their study, found that (60 %) of LIS professionals engage in Plagiarism. Furthermore, Barfi's (2017) study was conducted to examine the awareness of academic research ethics among senior librarians in selected polytechnics in Ghana. According to Barfi most librarians (88.8 %) strongly believed that plagiarism was the most common type of academic misconduct. Again, our findings also agree with Louw's (2017) study conducted to discover how staff members and students perceived plagiarism. According to Louw, 79 % of professors have experienced plagiarism when it comes to students' work. However, our findings refute Hoffman's (2005) study on ethical misconduct by librarians. One of Hoffman's findings was that only 2 % of librarians have experienced plagiarism in their line of duty. The current study, however, observes that many librarians engaged in or have experienced plagiarism in their line of duty.

Furthermore, many respondents asserted that lack of access to information was also one of the reasons that compelled them to indulge themselves in ethical misconduct. This finding supports a study conducted by Matingwina (2015). Matingwina's study aimed to comprehend the ethical problems that currently confront LIS professionals in Zimbabwe. The findings indicated that ninety-four (94 %) of ethical misconduct that librarians faced was a result of not getting fair access to library resources. Moreover, in this current study, some of the respondents explained how lack of access to information caused misconduct when they were not able to fulfill the information needs of students either because the material had been borrowed or because the library never owned a copy of the material in question. They explained further that the circumstances meant that access to information had been denied and that there was little they could do other than try other means of getting the information to the users illegally. This went contrary to the library code of ethics. They downloaded the material from the internet and made multiple photocopies of the entire material leading to a breach of copyright law.

One ethical misconduct that was so troubling was the fact that a librarian denied patrons access to the suitable information they needed at times for his private gains. The librarian discriminated along tribal and gender lines. Onoyeyan et al. (2014) consider the misuse of private information and the use of positions of authority for personal gain as unethical behavior. For this study, the researchers urge GLA to sanction librarians who discriminate among clients based on tribal or gender lines. Even though the literature is not explicit about it, we are proposing it.

One of the objectives of this study was to identify the components of information ethical misconduct among librarians in the Nursing and Midwifery Training Colleges in Ghana. The findings of the study revealed an overwhelming majority of the respondents were aware of the existence of a library code of ethics (CE) in the information profession. This supports the findings of Onoyeyan et al. (2014) which was conducted to determine the adherence to the professional code of ethics by librarians. The findings show that 93.2 % of practicing librarians in Ogun state were aware that librarians were professionals and had a code of ethics they must follow while 6.8 % did not respond. Again, this current study agrees with a study conducted by Hoffman (2005), on professional ethics and librarianship within the Texas Library Association (TLA) which found that a little over two-thirds of members (68 %) said they were aware that TLA had a Code of Ethics.

In as much as overwhelming respondents said they were aware of the existence of the library code of ethics, one of them proclaimed that he was not aware of it. As stated by NMTC8:

I don't know if a code of ethics exists in librarianship but I wouldn't be surprised if it does because most professions do have it.

This confirms a study conducted by Igbeka and Okoroma (2013) on the awareness and applicability of librarianship ethics among librarians. One of the findings of the study revealed that 15 % of the librarians were not aware of the existence of a code of ethics for librarians. In this current study, only one out of the total respondents claimed not to be

aware of the existence of a code of ethics for information professionals.

Furthermore, the violation of intellectual property rights was identified as one of the ethical misconducts that most librarians engaged themselves in. This misconduct was also identified by some researchers like Dunmade and Tella (2023), Nafisah (2023), Afolayan (2022), Osuchukwu et al. (2022), Shamsi et al. (2021), Onoyeyan et al. (2014). The researchers aimed to find out from the respondents the kind of dilemmas they often experienced in their quest to satisfy their clients. The majority of the respondents mentioned the issue of intellectual property rights. Some of the respondents admitted that they were always violating intellectual property rights for the interest of their clients. This confirms the study on ethical dilemmas conducted by Onoyeyan et al. (2014), which evaluated the ethical dilemmas that working librarians in Nigeria's Ogun State's federal, state, and private colleges faced. Given an overall response rate of 88 %, the findings of the survey revealed that issues of intellectual property rights were the biggest ethical challenges facing librarians, receiving a response rate of 27.1 %. Moreover, in this recent study, a few of the respondents declared selection decisions as another ethical conundrum they face as information professionals. This view is also supported by Onoyeyan et al. (2014), where selection decisions by 24.7 % of librarians were reported. In this current study, a few of the respondents declared that they were always torn between considering giving patrons old editions of books (selection decision) or downloading the recent edition from the internet and distributing widely the whole material which violates an intellectual property right.

Furthermore, many of the respondents mentioned quick turnaround as an ethical dilemma they faced as librarians. Quick turn-around occurs when there are too many clients for the librarian to serve at a particular point in time. This compelled the librarian to use any alternative means to get access to the information needed by the clients. Hence leading to an ethical conundrum.

As said by NMTC2:

I sometimes find myself in a conflict in choosing between giving patrons unlimited access to information and protecting intellectual property rights. It is a great dilemma for me as a librarian. I end up violating one of them.

Regarding inadequate funds, though the literature was silent on it as a cause of ethical misconduct, our current study attributes to lack of funds as a major cause. Librarians are finding unorthodox means of satisfying clients who come to ask for materials that they do not possess in the library as suggested by NTMC4 and NTMC1.

Regarding measures to address ethical misconduct, some of the respondents indicated education and training (NMTC 9, NMTC11); employment of qualified librarians by the nursing colleges (NMTC12, NMTC4); management to take interest in library affairs (NMTC2, NMTC4); awareness of the code of ethics (NMTC9, NMTC11) and the provision of adequate funds for the libraries (NMTC4, NMTC1, NMTC7).

Conclusion

Several ethical misconducts were found among the librarians of NMTC, the outstanding one being plagiarism. Several others also mentioned violation of intellectual property rights while a few of them mentioned a lack of access to information. Additionally, the study also found that the desire to help users quickly carry out searches, inadequate funds, ignorance of the code of ethics, and lack of education were the main reasons why most NMTC librarians involved themselves in such ethical misconduct in the profession.

Recommendations

The study recommends the following: the management of NMTCs provides enough funding for libraries to equip them with the acquisition of legitimate materials to curtail the violation of intellectual property rights and all forms of ethical misconduct and dilemmas as a whole.

Furthermore, the researchers propose that the Ghana Library Association which is the body responsible for librarians' interests should urgently hold a seminar/workshop to refresh practicing librarians' knowledge of the existing code of ethics and also, revise the 2014 Library Code of Ethics. Moreover, we strongly recommend that GLA should sanction librarians who in providing information services to clients, discriminate among them based on tribe, race, gender, etc. just as other professionals do. This will serve as a deterrent to others.

Declaration of competing interest

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There are no additional individuals who met the requirements for authorship but are not identified, and we hereby confirm that the article has been reviewed and approved by all named authors. Additionally, we attest that we all approved of the manuscript's authorship order as it is indicated there.

We certify that the protection of the intellectual property connected to this work has been given the required consideration and that there are no intellectual property-related barriers to publishing, including the timing of publication. By completing this, we certify that we have adhered to our institutions' intellectual property policies.

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Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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