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Full Length Research

Impacts of Information Literacy on Academic Performances of Students of Ojaja University, Eiyenkorin-Ilorin, Kwara State

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Abstract

This study investigates the impacts of information literacy on the academic performances of students at Ojaja University, Eiyenkorin-Ilorin, Kwara State. Information literacy, the ability to locate, evaluate, and effectively use information, plays a vital role in modern education. With a population of 120 students, this research adopted a survey design, and a questionnaire was used to gather information from students on the impact of information literacy skills. A simple random sampling technique was used to arrive at seventy-five (75) respondents. Findings revealed that ... This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the role of information literacy in education, informing educational policies and practices for Ojaja University and similar institutions in Kwara State.

Keywords: Information, Information literacy, academic performances, Ojaja University.

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INTRODUCTION

Information literacy, a fundamental component of higher education, is a multifaceted skill that empowers individuals to access, evaluate, and effectively use information in various formats to fulfil their academic, professional, and personal needs. As academic institutions worldwide grapple with the challenges posed by the information age, understanding the significance of information literacy in the context of student academic performance is critical. This research explores the impacts of information literacy on the academic performances of students enrolled at Ojaja University, Eiyenkorin-Ilorin, Kwara State, a dynamic institution where information literacy's role in shaping the educational landscape is of paramount importance.

In the contemporary digital era, students are exposed to an unprecedented amount of information from a multitude of sources, ranging from academic databases to social media platforms. To excel academically,

students must be equipped with the skills necessary to discern credible information from the vast sea of misinformation.

Information literacy is the tool that empowers students to navigate this complex information landscape successfully. Ojaja University, situated in Eiyenkorin-Ilorin, Kwara State, is no exception to this evolving paradigm. As students at Ojaja University engage in various academic endeavours, it is imperative that they possess the competencies needed to critically evaluate, integrate, and apply information effectively in their coursework.

A substantial body of research indicates that information literacy plays a pivotal role in enhancing academic performance. According to the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), information literacy is defined as "the set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information, the

understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning" (ACRL, 2016). Information literacy skills empower students to formulate well-reasoned research questions, locate and access relevant resources, critically evaluate information sources, synthesise findings, and ethically cite their sources – all of which contribute to higher academic achievement (Bruce, 2013; Head, 2013).

According to the Alexandria Proclamation of 2005, information literacy (IL) is a crucial ability for people to have in order to achieve their academic, professional, social, and personal goals (American Association of School Librarians [AASL], 2007). This statement proves that information literacy is necessary for individuals to be effective lifelong learners and to participate in online communities. According to Ettaniyil and Nair (2018), having access to information is a human right, and exercising that right requires information literacy. Students who are knowledgeable about locating, assessing, analysing, integrating, managing, and successfully communicating information to others are successful in life.

Information literacy is a set of information needed for searching, retrieval, evaluating, and making the best use of information (Soleymani, 2014). Information literacy means the ability to know the need for information and the ability to identify, locate, evaluate, and effectively use information for solving a problem practically. Nowadays, the importance of information literacy is increasing significantly. The ability to access and evaluate information are the characteristics of the contemporary world. Students who are well-informed about finding, evaluating, analysing, integrating, managing, and conveying information to others efficiently and effectively are likely to record academic success (Ettaniyil & Nair, 2018).

This research endeavours to shed light on the specific impacts of information literacy on the academic performances of students at Ojaja University, taking into account the unique socio-cultural and educational context of Kwara State. By conducting a comprehensive assessment, we aim to determine whether enhanced information literacy skills correlate with improved academic outcomes, such as higher grades, increased research productivity, and a deeper understanding of course content.

In an era characterised by the proliferation of information, this study seeks to provide valuable insights that can inform policy decisions, curriculum development, and pedagogical strategies at Ojaja University and beyond. The findings from this research can help educators, administrators, and policymakers understand how to better integrate information literacy education into the curriculum and create an academic environment that fosters student success in an information-rich society.

Statement of the Problem

Academic performance of students is the ultimate focus of most students in tertiary institutions. Studies have revealed that factors such as gender, class attendance, type of department, teacher-student relationship, the result of pre-university public examinations, the self-confidence level of the students, depression, etc., are significant in affecting students' academic performance (Ahmmad & Salim, 2018). It is obvious that information literacy is not among the factors aforementioned.

However, Banik and Kumar (2019) argued that information literacy skills are significant factors influencing students' academic performance. This is because undergraduates may be aware of information resources in libraries in their institutions, but they may not efficiently and effectively use the information resources to enhance their academic performances based on their lack of information literacy skills.

Soleymani (2014) posited that information literacy is one of the most important factors that leads to educational success. He stressed that as there is a significant positive relationship between information literacy and students' academic performance, librarians should necessarily provide students with relative skills dealing with information literacy to improve their academic performance. This justifies the investigation of how information literacy impacts the academic performance of students at Ojaja University in Eiyenkorin, Ilorin, Kwara State.

Objectives

This study will be guided by both primary and specific objectives. The main objective is to investigate the impact of information literacy on the academic performances of students of Ojaja University, Eiyenkorin, Ilorin, Kwara State.

The specific objectives are to:

1. Identify if the students of Ojaja University are aware of information literacy;
2. Identify the components of information literacy that impact the academic performance of students of Ojaja University; and,
3. Know why students of Ojaja University fail to use information literacy to impact their academic performance.

Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following questions:

1. Are students of Ojaja University aware of information literacy?
2. What are the components of information literacy that impact the academic performance of students of Ojaja University?
3. Why do students of Ojaja University fail to use information literacy to impact their academic performance?

The significance of the Study

The study will be beneficial to students of Ojaja University, Eiyenkorin-Ilorin, and students in higher institutions generally. It will help students understand the importance of information literacy skills and why acquiring these skills is essential for their academic success.

The scope of the Study

The study is limited to the impacts of information literacy skills on academic performances of students of Ojaja University, Eiyenkorin-Ilorin only. The population of the study is strictly the students of Ojaja University, Eiyenkorin-Ilorin, Kwara State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literacy is perceived as the basic ability to read and write. Its flexibility has made it possible to be assigned different adjectives, which may influence their meanings in different contexts. For instance, there are data literacy, computer literacy, digital literacy, media literacy, financial literacy, legal literacy, ICT literacy and information literacy. Among the literacies mentioned, information literacy is the most important and will remain so long as information remains paramount for the survival and advancement of human affairs.

There are other ways students' academic performance can be affected aside from students' information literacy skills. That is why Khan and Mustaq (2012) explained that students' academic performance is affected by many factors, like social, economic, psychological, environmental, and personal. Although these factors strongly influence students' academic performance, these factors vary from person to person and place to place. Previous studies highlight different factors, like class schedules, class size, the environment of the class, the technology used in the class and exam systems, guidance, English textbooks, homework, extracurricular activities, family income, and so on (Kumar & Banik, 2019).

The Chartered Institute of Library Professionals (CILIP) developed an information literacy model that includes eight competencies or understandings

necessary for a person to be considered information literate. These are

- A need for information;
- The resources available;
- How to find information;
- Need to evaluate results;
- How to work with or exploit results;
- Ethics and responsibility of use;
- How to communicate or share findings; and
- How to manage findings (Infolit.org.uk 2018).

CILIP (2018) also explained that information literacy is the ability to think critically and make balanced judgements about any information we find and use. It empowers us as citizens to reach and express informed views and to engage fully with society.

Mayer and Krampen (2017) examined whether university students' information literacy contributes to their academic performance over and above their level of general cognitive abilities. Fifty-three German psychology students (18–25 years, 85% female) participated in a longitudinal study with four waves of measurement spanning the first 18 months of their bachelor studies. Step-by-step analysis showed that students' scholarly information literacy, measured by a test on how to search for and evaluate information, was linked to their university grades and basic psychology knowledge, even when considering their general intelligence. According to additional simple slope analyses, information literacy was able to compensate for limited cognitive ability: information literacy and academic performance were only associated in students with lower working memory capacity.

Ettaniyil and Nair (2018) examined information literacy among secondary-level student teachers. A normative survey method was adopted for the collection of data from different aided-teacher education colleges. They concluded that information literacy is a vital skill for twenty-first-century teachers and students in all higher education. Accessing information is a fundamental right for people, and information literacy is essential for them to apply this right. Individuals who are well-informed about finding, evaluating, analysing, integrating, managing, and conveying information to others efficiently and effectively are successful in life. Information-literate students, faculty, and the general public were most efficient for answering queries, providing clarifications, and budding new concepts and thoughts for the future.

Banik and Kumar (2019) explored the level of academic performance and information literacy skills of undergraduate students in Bangladesh. They collected primary data from 325 students and employed several statistical and econometric methods. Their study firstly uses an information literacy skill index to measure the level of students' information literacy skills and secondly, uses a linear regression estimated by the OLS

method to examine the impact of information literacy skills on students' academic performance. The study finds that most of the students' Grade Point Average (GPA) is medium standard, which ranges between 3.01 and 3.50, and the level of information literacy skill is lower, which ranges between 10 and 20. Besides, the study also finds that study hours, family income, class attendance, past academic results and information literacy skills are the significant factors which influence students' academic performance. More specifically, the study finds that students' GPA may be increased by 0.012 if students' information literacy skill is increased by one unit.

Soleymani (2014) investigated the relationship between information literacy and academic performance among students at Isfahan University of Medical Sciences. A survey method was used for all MA students in Isfahan University of Medical Sciences. The sample size was determined by using the Cochran formula, which resulted in 265 samples that were selected by stratified random sampling. Data collection was through information literacy questionnaires designed by Davarpanah and Siamak, verified by Library and Information Sciences experts, and finally had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.83. To determine academic performance, the average scores of the students in previous semesters were considered. The information literacy of all other students was significantly higher than medium, except for students at nursing and nutrition faculties. The students of the Management and Information Sciences faculty had the highest level of information literacy, and students of the nutrition faculty were attributed with the least level. There was no significant difference between male and female students' information literacy. They also found that there was a significant positive relationship between information literacy and students' academic performance at Isfahan University of Medical Sciences.

Alinejad, Sarmad, Zandi, and Shobeiri (2018) studied information literacy levels and their role in the learning process of electronics students in the Department of Electronics at Amir Kabir, Shiraz, and Science and Technology Universities. First, the study showed that the information literacy level was low. Second, there were different levels of information literacy, as the highest was standard 1 and the lowest was standard. Third, there was a significant positive relationship between information literacy and electronics students' academic performance, like the higher the information literacy level, the better the academic performance.

Aliyu and Chiwar (2019) examined the impact of information literacy on students' academic performance at the American University of Nigeria (AUN), Yola. The population comprises all the undergraduates that registered with the university library from the three schools. Based on the simple random sampling technique, a sample of 107 students was selected for the study. A questionnaire was used to collect data. Their

findings revealed that delivering information literacy skills is one of the major needs for information literacy; library orientation constitutes the major responsibility of the Information Literacy Unit; and information literacy enhances accessibility, evaluation, processing and use of information for academic activities, while diverse groups with different backgrounds, lack of learning zeal from the students, uncooperative attitude of library staff and inadequate orientation time are the major challenges associated with information literacy in the American University of Nigeria Library.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a survey design, and a questionnaire was used to gather information from students about the impact of information literacy skills on students' academic performance. A research questionnaire was administered to a population of One Hundred and Twenty (120) students across all the fifteen (15) departments of Ojaja University. The sample size consists of seventy-five (75) students, selected using a simple random sampling technique. A total of seventy-five (75) questionnaires was administered, and seventy (70) were recovered. The collected data was analysed using descriptive statistics, frequency counts, percentages, and tables. The statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) software was used to analyse the data.

FINDINGS, DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATIONS

Respondents' Demographic Information

The respondents cut across the departments in Ojaja University, Eiyenkorin, which include Accounting, Banking and Finance, Business Administration, Computer Science, Biology, Biochemistry, Mathematics, Chemistry, Microbiology, Physics, Economics, Mass Communication, English Language, History and Diplomatic Studies and French.

Each department constitutes a group; hence, discussions were held with 15 groups. The majority of the overall respondents were female, with an age range of 16–25 years.

Research Question One: Are students of Ojaja University aware of how information literacy can enhance their academic performance?

Information literacy encompasses a set of skills or abilities: identifying when information is needed, searching for it, locating and retrieving it in the desired format, evaluating it, and using it ethically and legally. Information literacy is essential to education in the 21st century because it moulds students' characters for lifelong learning, critical and independent thinking skills and problem solving.

The respondents claimed to be aware of the impact of information literacy on their academic performances based on the discussions held with them by the researcher. The majority of the group all agreed that the knowledge of information literacy they have gained from the discussion has revealed to them that there are different types of information, and when it comes to the academic aspect, the information they need is academic information. After realising their information needs, the next thing for them to do is search, locate, retrieve, evaluate and use information for academic purposes.

Group Three and Seven aptly explained their awareness of how information literacy can enhance their academic performance as thus:

"Information literacy equips us with the competencies to realize that we need information. However, needing information is not enough to get our academic problems solved. Information literacy extends to letting us know different sources we can consult to search for information locate and retrieve the information and ultimately use information without abusing it."

The respondents cited examples by noting that:

"For instance, our ability to search for academic information will help us know some information resources we can consult to enhance our academic performance. Some of the sources we can search for include books, journals, databases, etc. It also helps us know whether to use information for different academic activities such as assignments, homework, debates, group discussions and project writing."

Research Question Two: What are the components of information literacy that impact academic performance of students of Ojaja University?

During the discussion, the researcher emphasised the ability to realise or know when information is needed, the ability to search for information, the ability to find, locate and retrieve information, the ability to evaluate data and the ability to use information as components of information literacy. The motive for such was to condense the definition of information literacy for the respondents so that they comprehend it easily.

The respondents claimed that all the components of information literacy are essential to their academic performances because sometimes they don't realise or know that they need to be informed about a particular concept or concepts of interest. Their initial impression was that everything they needed to know should be taught by their lecturers. However, now that they have been enlightened on information literacy, they have (to an extent) developed the ability to learn independently.

Group nine, 12 and 13 stressed that:

"Even if we know that we need information, it may be difficult for us to search, find, access, retrieve and use the needed information. Using information efficiently and

effectively is the most important to us because our inability to use information can make us misuse information, which may lead to information disorders, false attributions, censorship and mismanagement of academic information.

"Information literacy has enhanced our abilities to evaluate information and contextualize their usage. Previously, we didn't know how to surf information, differentiate between theories, facts and opinions. But now that we have been exposed to what information literacy entails, we have known how to assess information, determine their qualities and contextualize them."

Ultimately, the respondents remarked that information literacy has broaden their understanding of tertiary education by knowing that they need to go the extra mile to acquire information beyond what they were taught in their classrooms. This will help them with information to enrich their notes and prepare themselves for tests, presentations, debates and examinations.

Why do students of Ojaja University fail to use information literacy to impact their academic performance?

Studies have revealed different factors why information literacy failed to be effective for students. Some of the factors include students' poor awareness of information literacy, inadequate/lack of information literacy instructions, poor library orientations, poor attitudes of students towards learning information literacy and ineffective methods of teaching information literacy skills (Alinejad et al., 2018; Aliyu & Chiwar, 2019).

Findings of this study are found to be consistent with the previous studies. For instance, the respondents claimed that they are not aware of information literacy and its components. This lack of awareness makes them not conscious of their need for academic information, let alone having the abilities to search, find, access, locate, retrieve, evaluate and use information. The respondents further claimed that their lack of awareness of information literacy influences their information needs and seeking behaviours.

The respondents claimed that they can't clearly explain the major factors limiting them from harnessing the potential of information literacy for academic performance. Groups One, 6 and 13 aptly submitted that: *"It is difficult for us to state in precise terms, the problems associated with our failures to leverage information literacy for our academic performance. However, we can categorically say that we aren't aware of information literacy before this discussion and also, information literacy is not added to the Use of Library being taught in the University."*

The researcher further asked the respondents specific questions on poor attitudes of students towards learning information literacy and ineffective methods of teaching

information literacy skills. The respondents acknowledged that it may be possible for students to exhibit poor attitudes towards information literacy. But whatever attitudes students will exhibit are determined by the methods adopted for teaching information literacy to students.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Information literacy encompasses a set of skills that includes identifying the need for information, as well as finding, locating, accessing, retrieving, evaluating, and utilising information to support various human endeavours, including academic performance. This study has established that the students of Ojaja University are aware that information literacy can enhance their academic performances by equipping them with the abilities to find, evaluate and use academic information. However, students of Ojaja University are failing to harness information literacy for their academic performances because of inadequate information literacy instructions and ineffective teaching of information literacy skills.

Based on the findings, this study recommends that:

Information literacy should be taught or added as part of course content in the Use of Library taught at Ojaja University. This will contribute to the students' awareness of information literacy and also enable them to have adequate information literacy skills that will enhance their academic performances.

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