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ASSESSING INFORMATION LITERACY SKILLS AMONG ACADEMIC STAFF IN PUBLIC COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN SOUTHEAST NIGERIA

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Abstract

In this digital era, individuals must acquire the skills, information, and attitudes necessary for the workforce and society in the twenty-first century. These attributes are acknowledged by academics, instructors, corporate leaders, and government initiatives as essential for achieving success in the 21st century. Academicians require a distinct combination of abilities, specialized knowledge, and mental resilience to do research, educate, and support the community. Although there are advantages to incorporating technology in education, research has shown that academic faculty still lack proficiency in information literacy (IL). This study assessed the IL proficiency of academic staff members at public education colleges in southeast Nigeria. The research utilized a quantitative methodology and involved academic personnel from public institutes of education in Southeast Nigeria who were surveyed both offline and online. 725 questionnaire respondents were selected using purposive sampling technique. Version 28 of SPSS was used in data analysis. The descriptive findings demonstrated a high degree of information literacy and media literacy. The study recommends that management of institutions should keep a close eye on their academic staff of IL Skills and ML Skills to maximize each person's productivity. Future studies could investigate the correlation between IL skills with other higher education categories in the nation to support the UNESCO 2030 agenda to provide Quality Education.

Keywords: Information Literacy, Information Literacy Skills, Assessment, Academic Staff, Colleges of Education, Nigeria.

Introduction

Information Literacy requires active participation in an information society. We should always strive to improve our hard and soft skills, notably information literacy. By promoting our skills, we may become valuable assets to an organization. With the advent of the knowledge economy, it has become essential for individuals to continuously improve their information literacy skills to adapt to the always-evolving information environment. Sadly, inadequate information skills have impeded lifelong education (Emisiko and Severina, 2018).

Information search is becoming increasingly vital, particularly for academic and research purposes. Similarly, sifting through a great deal of material available in libraries and online to uncover meaningful and accurate data is becoming increasingly important. Information literacy competency provides academic personnel with a wide range of information resources as well as the capacity to identify and assess resources, which is required for researchers. Since Information literacy empowers the individual to decide the specific information required, locate it, analyze it, and successfully use it to address a given issue or problem, the academic staff of colleges of education must learn how to research and exploit information to effectively interpret and utilize it for national decision-making to enable them to discharge their duties efficiently. However, this set of skills required for effective research and information use is insufficient. (Madu and Akinboro (2012); Mtebe and Raisao (2014); Oyedipe and Popoola (2019). Unfortunately, researchers have discovered that many academic professionals have poor or no information literacy skills, preventing them

from fully using electronic resources in their educational professions (Madu and Akinboro, 2012).

Academic staff at Nigerian institutes of education are primarily responsible for teaching, research, and community service. To fulfil these obligations effectively and efficiently, they require the most up-to-date informational resources to supplement their knowledge.

Literature Review

Information Literacy Skills.

Information Literacy (IL) is a key to lifelong learning and achieving educational goals. It is crucial for lifelong learning, especially in education, where knowledge must be transferred to creative, critical thinkers and lifelong learners (Durodolu, & Ochalla, 2017). Information literacy improves learning, skills, values, beliefs, and cultural awareness (Ashiver, Agoh & Ihongo, 2018). Information literacy encourages people to think critically about the information they receive and to generate new knowledge.

As the volume of information grows, acquiring and utilizing the correct information for academic and research objectives becomes increasingly essential. However, according to Nwosu, Obiamulu, and Udem (2015), the difficulty is not producing, storing, or accessing information but instead encouraging individuals to obtain access to and utilize information resources. Information literacy is the capacity to decide if specific information is required, locate it, analyze it, and successfully use it to address a given issue or problem. (The American Library Association (2010), cited by Emisiko and Severina (2018). Since information search is becoming increasingly important, particularly for academic and research purposes, the academic staff of colleges of education must learn how to research and

exploit information to effectively interpret and utilize it for national decision-making to enable them to discharge their duties efficiently.

Exponentially, more information has led to an information explosion. Academic staff must have remarkable talents to perform well. Academic employees must acquire information literacy skills to function effectively for academic institutions and national growth. IL talents can recognize, analyse, organize, use, and transmit information in any format. IL talents include research, critical thinking, computers, and communication (Indeed Education Team, 2021). A 21st-century educator who filters information for teaching, learning, and community service needs practical IL skills which would enable lifelong learning. Some occupations or procedures require specialized knowledge. IL abilities include finding, using, and managing information resources. According to Panawecra, as cited by Anunobi, and Uden (2014), IL skills help people become independent lifelong learners and transfer their knowledge to other settings. Information literacy is a necessary ability in today's digitally advanced world. In this age of information proliferation, it is acknowledged by the international community and Nigeria as a vital tool for advancement and growth (Krubu, 2015). It includes understanding a person's information concerns and requirements. It encompasses the techniques, abilities, and knowledge required to determine information needs, access, analyze, synthesize, use, and share information ethically, and adopt proper information behaviour (SCONUL 2011).

The development of information literacy skills is critical for professionals in a variety of industries and is dependent on individuals' cognitive talents (Krubu, 2015). Furthermore, information literacy abilities are seen as vital components of the graduate traits and skills demanded by the Nigerian labour force (Krubu, 2015; Krubu et al., 2017, citing Johnson & Weber). Information literacy enables users to successfully define their information needs,

plan and strategize their search for appropriate information, and critically assess and use the information found (Krubu et al., 2017).

Colleges of Education

The College of Education system is one of the tripods of tertiary education in Nigeria and it has the primary role of training teachers who will be awarded the minimum teaching qualification of Nigerian Certificate of Education (NCE). This certificate qualifies one to teach in junior secondary schools and technical colleges in Nigeria and it takes three years to complete. These teachers' institutions were formally known as Advanced Teachers' Colleges and were affiliated to different universities in Nigeria. They were later transformed into Colleges of Education under the supervision of one umbrella body known as the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) established in 1989. (Onifade & Onifade,2011)

Colleges of education encompassed the production of professional teachers who are equipped with skills and methodologies of teaching in our primary and junior secondary levels of education in Nigeria. Essentially, colleges of education are to provide full-time courses in teaching, instruction, and training and to conduct courses in education for qualified teachers.

Academic staff members are individuals employed by educational institutions who contribute to the institution's core functions of teaching, research and or providing academic support. According to the Academic Calendar of the University of Manitoba (2023), "Academic Staff" includes all individuals primarily involved in instruction, research, or service/academic administration. They include faculty members who teach courses and conduct research, as well as various administrative and support staff who play roles in

academic program management, student services and institutional administration. Academic staff collectively contribute to the academic and administrative well-being of the institution.

Research Objective and Question

The specific aim of the study is

1) To identify the level of information literacy skills possessed among academic staff at the Colleges of Education in Southeast Nigeria, with respect to determine the need for information, finding information assessing the information and applying the information.

Drawing on the specified goal, the subsequent research question was put forth to obtain data for the inquiry, specifically:

1) What is the level of information literacy possessed by academic staff of colleges of education in Southeast Nigeria with respect to determine the need for information, finding information assessing the information and applying the information?

Research methodology

One important thing to keep in mind while creating a survey questionnaire is to test it. Pre-testing has a direct impact on the questionnaire's quality and is a crucial phase (Taherdoost, 2022). Pre-testing is used to identify any problems with the questions, confusion in the inquiries or other hindrances to collecting information through a survey. The instrument was pre-tested to enhance the validity and content of the study. Pretesting is considered essential for developing survey questions and is also vital for enhancing data collecting in quality-of-life studies. (Dawadi, 2021).

After revising the questionnaire based on the recommendations provided by the expert evaluators, the researcher conducted the pilot study. Conducting a pilot study with possible participants is crucial once the survey's platforms, contents, and instruments have been determined. According to In (2017), preliminary investigation examines whether a certain task can be accomplished, whether it is worth pursuing, and if so, the appropriate approach to take. The five-Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" (coded as 1) to "strongly agree" (coded as 5), is employed in all parts. A sample of 39 academic staff members from Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe, Anambra State, and Federal College of Education, Eha–Amufu, Enugu State, Nigeria, were included in this study. The College was selected based on its convenient location for the researcher.

The respondents were asked to assess their answers using the Likert scale. The results of the pilot research were subjected to statistical analysis to ensure that no alterations to the instrument were necessary. Likewise, necessary changes were made and inquiries that did not add to data collection were eliminated.

A specific sample is used for research, and the findings are extrapolated to a broad or full target population. As stated by Shukla (2020), the term "population" in research denotes the entirety or categorization of all the entities to which the findings will be applicable. Sample size refers to the complete number of individuals selected from the research community. The researcher employed nonprobability sampling approach. and purposive sampling. Purposeful sampling is a set of non-probability sampling procedures that select units based on specific features needed for the sample. This study utilized a sample size calculator to determine the minimum sample size. Raosoft.com (2019), provides a 5% error margin and 95% confidence level. According to Raosoft's sample calculator, the

recommended sample size is 344 academic staff from these colleges of education. Six geographical zones make up Nigeria: North-Central, Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, South-South, and Southwest. Five states make up the Southeast region: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo. The study's population consists of faculty members of education colleges in Nigeria's southeast region. There are four federal and five state schools of education that make up the Colleges of Education (COE) were utilized in this study. With a population of roughly 3200, the 9 COE got from Statistics of academic employees at Nigerian education colleges, (Enwezor & Obi, 2022), of whom 344 academic employees will be the respondents in a representative sample, derived from Sample Size Calculator by Raosoft, Inc.

The survey for this research was published using the internet platform Google Forms. The survey link was opened to respondents from 17th July 2023 until 31st October 2023 (4 months). Respondents had the flexibility to participate at any point during the specified timeframe. The online forms have been submitted individually to the respondents through email. The following chapter presents the analysis's findings. The printed survey was also sent to the participants in areas with limited or insufficient network coverage with the help of colleagues. Both hard copy and online forms were used, along with an introduction, a cover letter, and a deadline for completing the questionnaire. To speed up the process of distributing and collecting the questionnaire, copies were given to the participants.

The research utilized a quantitative methodology and involved academic personnel from public colleges of education in Southeast Nigeria who were surveyed both offline and

online. 725 questionnaire respondents were selected using purposeful sampling. Version 28 of SPSS was used for data analysis.

5.0. Descriptive Analysis of Information Literacy Skills

In measuring information literacy skills, four dimensions were used, namely i) determine when information is needed, (ii) need to find information, (iii) assess information, and (iv) apply information.

Perceived Level of Need for Information (NS)

Need skills are the capacity to assess when data and investigation are required for a specific academic task (Malik et. al,2022). The need for information dimension was measured with five items and as illustrated in Table 5.12, the average mean value was 4.501. The five items "I can choose the information that best suits my needs." had a mean value of 4.546, the highest value, and 4.392, the lowest value. My understanding of the topic of the job can be expanded by utilizing a variety of sources.

Table 1.1

Descriptive Analysis for NS

		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
NS2	I can ascertain the information's overarching purpose for the given task.	725	1.00	5.00	4.516	0.674	0.455
NS3	I can create inquiries to direct the assigned work.	725	1.00	5.00	4.510	0.721	0.521

NS4	I can utilize multiple resources to enhance your knowledge of the task's subject.	725	1.00	5.00	4.392	0.811	0.658
NS5	I can decide on how to locate the data I require	725	1.00	5.00	4.541	0.745	0.555
NS6	I can decide which information is most relevant to my needs	725	1.00	5.	4.546	0.739	0.547
	Valid N (listwise)	**725**	**1.00**	**5.00**	**4.501**		

1.Strongly Disagree; 2. Disagree; 3. Neutral; 4. Agree; and 5. Strongly Agree

Perceived Level of Location of information (LS)

Locate skills and ability to locate quality information resources from available sources (Babalola & Umar, 2021). The location of information dimension was measured with four items and as illustrated in Table below, the average mean value was 4.4893.

Of the four items “I can obtain background information by consulting an encyclopaedia" found that the mean value was 4.309, the lowest mean value, and the highest mean value, 4.662. " I'm able to create search terms like author, title, and subject for information."

Table 1.2

Descriptive Analysis for LS

		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
LS2	I can use databases to find information.	725	1.00	5.00	4.401	1.006	1.014

LS3	I can use an encyclopaedia to gather background information	725	1.00	5.00	4.309	1.050	1.103
LS4	Google and Yahoo are search engines I can use to find information resources.	725	1.00	5.00	4.585	0.772	.597
LS5	I'm able to create search terms like author, title, and subject for information.	725	1.00	5.00	4.662	0.685	.470
	Valid N (listwise)	**725**	**1.00**	**5.00**	**4.4893**		

1. Strongly Disagree; 2. Disagree; 3. Neutral; 4. Agree; and 5. Strongly Agree

5.3. Perceived Level of Evaluation of Information (ES)

Evaluate skills consist of the ability to assess information resources, progress of work, and improvement needed (Babalola & Umar, 2021). Evaluation of information (ES) dimension was measured with seven items and as illustrated in Table below, the average mean value was 4. 341. From the seven items “I can evaluate the quality of my information-gathering process and its results.” the greatest average value is 4.484, while the lowest average value is 4.143."Using the appropriate criteria, I can assess print resources."

Table 3: Descriptive Analysis for ES

		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
ES2	I can evaluate print resources using acceptable criteria.	725	1.00	5.00	4.143	0.955	.913
ES3	I can evaluate information resources based on authority, accuracy, authority, and relevance	725	1.00	5.00	4.396	0.897	1.103

ES4	I can analyze collected information	725	1.00	5.00	4.484	0.833	.806
	Valid N (listwise)	**725**	**1.00**	**5.00**	**4.341**		

1. Strongly Disagree; 2. Disagree; 3. Neutral; 4. Agree; and 5.

Strongly Agree

Perceived Level of Use of Information (US)

Use skills comprise the capacity to use information to finish a work or project, cite sources, and ethically use information. Five questions were used to measure the usage of information dimension; the average mean value is 4. 489, as shown in the table below. The highest mean score, 4.590, was reported for the fifth question, "I can develop new knowledge and understanding from the collected information," while the lowest mean value, 4.323, was noted. "I can communicate the outcome using proper writing and citation style".

Table 1.4

Descriptive Analysis for the US

		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
US1	I can develop new knowledge and understanding from the collected information.	725	1.00	5.00	4.590	0.761	.579
US2	I can use appropriate presentation software to present information.	725	1.00	5.00	4.541	0.777	.605
US3	I can use collected information in a legally accepted manner.	725	1.00	5.00	4.521	0.881	.777

US4	I can communicate the outcome using proper writing and citation style	725	1.00	5.00	4.323	0.901	.813
US5	I can compile bibliographies for a variety of sources, including books, papers, and websites.).	725	1.00	5.00	4.470	0.873	.763
	Valid N (listwise)	**725**	**1.00**	**5.00**	**4. 489**		

1. Strongly Disagree; 2. Disagree; 3. Neutral; 4. Agree; and 5. Strongly Agree

Discussion of Findings

The research aims to evaluate the degree of information literacy among academic staff members of public colleges of education in southeast Nigeria.

The level of information literacy skills possessed by academic staff of colleges of education in Southeast Nigeria.

The first objective is to measure the level of information literacy among academic staff, a modified 5-point Likert scale with four dimensions—identifying the need for information, locating information, analyzing information, and applying information—was used. The information literacy abilities' average overall worth of academic staff was examined. Tables 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, and 1.4 represent the results of the measures of the four characteristics of information literacy abilities. Observing the tables that illustrate the four aspects of information literacy abilities, the outcome shows that the faculty member's capacity to identify information needs (mean=4.501), locate information (mean=4.4893), evaluate information (mean=4.341), and use information (mean=4.489), were all high. This

implies that the faculty members can recognize a need for information, locate it, evaluate it, and use it extensively. The results of the findings agree with the findings of Babalola and Umar (2021) who found that academic staff have a high ability to acknowledge the need for information, find it, access it, assess it, arrange it, apply it, and share it ethically. It is worth noting that none of the items measured in the four dimensions of ILS recorded below 4.00.

Based on the findings, the overall mean for recognizing the need for information is 4.501 and none of the items were recorded below 4.00. These reveal that academic staff recognize the need for information and apply the same in the discharge of their genuine roles in research, teaching, and community service. Ashiver et al. (2018) who claim that someone who is information literate can recognize the necessity of precise and comprehensive knowledge as a basis for wise decision-making. To incorporate new information into the body of current knowledge, they can also create queries based on needs, identify prospective information sources, access information sources, including computers and other technology, evaluate information, and organize information. In education, where knowledge must be imparted to produce critical, creative thinkers and lifelong learners, IL is especially important for lifetime learning (Durodolu & Ochalla, 2017).

Additionally, both academic staff and students may benefit from the knowledge and abilities included in the information literacy idea. A student's academic career will be considerably more gratifying and trouble-free if they have a firm foundation in the appropriate abilities. Instructors who possess the information literacy abilities required to teach students can develop their critical thinking, intellectual curiosity, and ability to create and consume information. The second component of information literacy skills is information finding. The study's content is with the capacity to identify reliable information

sources from accessible sources (Babalola & Umar, 2021). The questionnaire offered four questions to gauge how well academic staff members could find information. The overall mean score for locating information was 4.4893. This shows that academic staff can locate the information they need from the vast resources available. The finding is like Olakunle and Olanrewaju (2019) where academic researchers are proficient in all facets of information-literate abilities. ILS's third dimension is evaluating information. Information evaluation is the capacity to evaluate information sources, progress of work, and improvement needed (Babalola & Umar, 2021). Three items were asked and the overall mean score for evaluation information is 4.341. This shows that academicians can evaluate information to discharge their duties.

The fourth dimension of ILS is the applying knowledge. In this sense, using information skills is being able to use it to finish a task or project, cite, and apply information ethically. Five items were asked, and the overall mean score is 4.489, revealing a high ability to use information for research, teaching, and community service. This implies that academic staff workers are highly skilled in recognising information needs, locating and obtaining information, evaluating information, applying information, organizing, applying, and ethically disseminating knowledge.

The findings are consistent with those of Babalola and Umar (2021) who found that academic staff have a high capacity to identify information needs, find and obtain it, assess it, organize it, utilize it, and present it responsibly, and Chen et al. (2023) who in their study report an overall score of IL of academic staffs in China to be as high as 75%.

From the discussion on information literacy skills, academic personnel possess high ILS. A user's ability to recognize, access, and apply the wealth of information available in

this era of information requires that they have an ILS. This includes academic staff members. Information literate individuals are those who have mastered the process of learning, according to Carbo (2015), referencing the American Library Association (1989). They can locate information, apply it in a way that allows others to benefit from it, and understand the structure of knowledge. People who can find the information needed for every task or decision at hand are prepared for lifelong learning.

7.0. Recommendations

The findings about the level of media literacy skills possessed by academic staff present an interesting point for discussion. The following recommendations are proposed:

1. Information Literacy Initiatives for Education Setting. The Federal Government of Nigeria, through the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (NDEPS) and the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) should develop an information literacy standard for Nigeria will equip Nigerians to overcome the limitations in the digital age and skill development. This will help to equip the workforce with the necessary digital skills to meet the ever-changing demands of the job market, resulting in enhancing their capacity to critically evaluate news, information, and digital content. Efforts to enhance information literacy can involve hosting workshops and lectures on various topics such as internet safety, data privacy, digital media usage, and digital security. To With the right approach and commitment, along with sufficient resources, building a highly skilled nation in the digital age can be possible.

.2. Providing Adequate IL Facilities with Network Coverage

The Federal Government of Nigeria through Federal and State Ministries of Education should provide adequate IL facilities with network coverage in higher institutions of learning. This is crucial for academic success, for full engagement in civic life in the twenty-first century and to prepare students for the workforce. Also, academic staff need a variety of information literacy resources for effective teaching in higher education institutions to enhance effective online instruction.

3. Comprehensive Training on ILS to Academic Staff for Online Teaching and Research Activities

The findings of the study highlight the importance of information literacy in workplace settings and suggest that institutions of higher learning should consider implementing training programmes to enhance information literacy skills among their employees (Wu, 2018; Naveed et al., 2022). According to Mandang (2017), Training is a vital part of human resource investment to improve work abilities and skills to improve employee performance. Resources, tools, and technologies that support the diverse levels of information literacy training seekers must be available too. Through continuous, well-coordinated academic training programmes, training, and skills development, academics will perform their core functions creditably. To sustain academic staff information literacy skills, constant training of academics on media and information literacy skills acquisition is hereby recommended to provide the academic staff with key, high-level generic skills like the capacity for lifelong critical, conceptual, and reflective thinking, and attributes such as creativity and originality. Thus, the management of education colleges must constantly organize information literacy skills programs to develop information-literate academics.

Conclusion

In Nigeria, colleges of education play a crucial role in higher learning by providing individuals with the essential skills needed for successful academic careers. Professors at these institutions play a vital role in imparting necessary knowledge to students and nurturing their independence and confidence. Academics must possess strong MLS to excel in their roles as educators and researchers. These competencies allow individuals to identify their information needs, access and evaluate sources of knowledge and overcome obstacles to acquiring information. Scholars can more effectively fulfil their roles by honing these skills, not only improving their teaching and research but also cultivating critical thinking and intellectual curiosity among students.

This study investigates the utilization of ILS by academic staff in Nigeria's colleges of education to meet the current teaching and research requirements. The research aims to fill a notable gap in the existing literature. This highlights the significance of these skills in allowing scholars to obtain, organize, and evaluate information resources, which in turn shapes how others in the educational system use information.

The findings indicate that academic staff have high degree of information literacy. This indicates the importance of customized strategies to enhance MIL processing in various academic settings. The study suggests that the National Commission of Colleges of Education should consider i*ntegrating the use of information literacy skills when assessing the performance of academic staff. To promote the production* of valuable research and contribute to personal and societal development, it is imperative to prioritize continuous efforts aimed at improving information literacy skills. This research provides important insights into the probable impact of ILS on academic performance, specifically in Nigeria's colleges of education. The importance of ongoing skill development is emphasized to meet

the changing requirements of higher education and to ensure that academics can effectively fulfil their roles as educators and researchers. The study's findings have broad implications that go beyond the academic realm. They provide a solid basis for future research and policy-making efforts focused on enhancing IL proficiency across all levels of education.

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