



Extent of Application of Information Literacy Skills among Undergraduates of Library and Information Science in Public Universities in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Angela N. Anike, Blessing N. Otubelu and Kelechi C. Okafor

Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria.

an.anike@unizik.edu.ng

nb.otubelu@unizik.edu.ng

Kcg.okafor@unizik.edu.ng

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Abstract

The study investigated the extent of the application of information literacy skills among undergraduates of library and information science in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria. Four research questions guided the study. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised undergraduates in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria. A proportionate stratified sampling technique was used to draw a sample size of 241 undergraduates for the study. The questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The findings of the study revealed among others that identification skills and utilization skills are to a high extent applied by undergraduates of library and information science in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria. It was also found that search skills and evaluation skills are to a low extent applied by undergraduates of library and information science in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria. Based on the findings, it was recommended that Heads of Departments of Library and Information Science in various universities should organize periodic workshops to upgrade the knowledge and skills of undergraduates in information search.

Keywords: Information Literacy Skills, Undergraduates, Identification Skills, Search Skills, Evaluation Skills, Utilization Skills

Introduction

Academic libraries are established in universities for efficient gathering, arrangement, storage, retrieval, and use of information resources. Libraries are established to support teaching, learning, and research activities by providing a variety of information resources (print, non-print, and electronic) in public universities (Nwalo & Babarinde, 2022). Some of the available information resources in the university library are textbooks, Projects/Theses/Dissertations, audiobooks, journals, Directories, reports, and Almanacs among others. Students can effectively search, retrieve, and use the available information resources in the library to carry out their academic and research activities through the application of information literacy skills.

Information literacy skills are a set of capabilities required for recognizing the need for information, and how to search for and utilize it in solving problems. Information literacy skills are defined as the abilities of individuals to identify information needs, locate, access, evaluate, organize, and utilize it (Perales & Dequito, 2023). Information literacy skills are the ability to place, manage, critically assess, and use information to solve problems, conduct research, and make decisions (Fajonyomi, Bukar & Ambali, 2021). They added that information literacy skills involve the ability to identify when information is needed and having the ability to efficiently locate, accurately evaluate, effectively use, and communicate information in various formats. Information literacy skills are the aptitude for identifying, locating, evaluating, synthesizing, and using the needed information to solve a problem.

Information literacy skills could enable students to have a proper understanding of information needs, and sources and how to locate, evaluate, and use them. Information literate persons are in the position to find out information needs, and the extent of information needs, locate and retrieve appropriate information sources, and evaluate and use them (Onanuga, Amuda & Ilori, 2021). Information-literate individuals are knowledgeable about finding, evaluating, analyzing, integrating, managing, and conveying information to others efficiently and effectively (Aduba, Obot & Baro, 2022). Information literacy skills are information recognition/identification skills, information search skills, and information evaluation skills (Aduba, Obot & Baro, 2022). Information literacy skills are required by undergraduates to critically analyze, interpret, and make valid judgments regarding the accuracy and authenticity of information. Information literacy skills deal with the capability of an individual to identify, locate, evaluate, organize, and effectively use the information to address general and personal issues and problems especially using the existing information to produce new ones (Udem & Anaehobi, 2020). Another scholar identified information literacy skills to include information identification skills, information search skills, evaluation information skills, information synthesis skills, and information utilization skills (Sahabi, Alegbeleye & Madukoma, 2019). The focus of this study is information identification skills, information search skills, evaluation information skills, and information utilization skills.

Information identification skills are the expertise and ability to recognize the information needs of individuals. Information identification skills refer to the abilities of undergraduate students to recognize the types of information needed to solve their problems (Sahabi, Alegbeleye & Madukoma, 2019). Continuing, the authors stressed that they must have a clear understanding of their problems to identify the needed information. It is abilities to decide how and where to find needed information to execute specific tasks. The identified information could be sourced through the application of Information search skills.

Information search skills are the competencies of utilizing relevant key terms to gather information. It is the ability to use the key concepts related to the subject matter to locate and retrieve accurate information. Information search skills are the ability to access information effectively and efficiently by finding information from various library sources, finding appropriate web sources, modifies search to broaden or narrow terms (Aduba, Obot & Baro, 2022). They added that it involves the ability to locate information resources using search tools such as abstracts, indexes, catalogues, and bibliographies. Information could be searched using appropriate keywords, names of authors, subject matters, dates, and titles. The credibility of searched information could be appraised using evaluation skills.

Information evaluation skills are the capabilities to verify the reliability, accuracy, and authenticity of information from different sources. Evaluation skills are the ability to appraise each electronic information resource from different components to determine which are best for them to use (Sahabi, Alegbeleye & Madukoma, 2019). It helps to determine the credibility of information gathered to solve a specific problem or academic task. Trustworthiness, exactness, and dependability of information from different sources could be determined through evaluation skills. Information materials can be evaluated using appropriate criteria, access to the quality, recency, accuracy, relevance, bias, objectivity, reputation, and credibility of the information sources (Pelemo, Onanuga, Ilori & Ugbala, 2020). Information evaluation skills enable students to critically assess the integrity, dependability, genuineness, fairness, and relevance of materials obtained from various sources before utilization.

Information utilization skills are the proficiencies to make judicious use of available information resources to carry out a given task. Information utilization skills are the ability to use information obtained from their sources (Dipetso & Moahi, 2019). They added that it entails the competencies to engage in reading, writing, and application of relevant information from different sources in solving a given problem. Information utilization skills could be applied by undergraduates to utilize the available scholarly outputs for studying, doing assignments, and conducting research activities.

Many scholars have conducted studies on information literacy skills in academic libraries. Onanuga, Amuda and Ilori (2021) assessed the information literacy skills of 200 library staff from eight selected academic libraries in South-Western, Nigeria. The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire. The findings of the study revealed among others that the majority of academic librarians use information

literacy skills daily. Also, Fajonyomi, Bukar and Ambali (2021) investigated information literacy skills and use of library resources by 122 postgraduate students in the University of Ilorin. A survey research design was adopted for the study. Findings revealed that Information literacy skills had a positive and significant influence on the use of library resources by postgraduate students at University of Ilorin. A study on comparative study of information literacy skills among students of library and information science and computer science in Nigerian Universities was carried out by Aduba, Obot and Baro (2022). A structured questionnaire was used as the instrument to collect data from a sample of 250 students. Findings from the study revealed that students apply information literacy skills such as identification, search, and evaluation skills in library and information science and computer science in the two universities

It seems that there is underutilization of information resources among undergraduate possibly due to the deficiencies in their information literacy skills in public universities in Anambra State. This is buttressed by the observation of some scholars which revealed that undergraduates in many universities in Nigeria usually experience restricted access to and use of electronic information resources and services probably due to their low level of information literacy skills (Sahabi, Otobo & Bukar, 2021). Similarly, other scholars noted that university users especially students at undergraduate levels in Nigeria, face many difficulties in locating, evaluating, using, and communicating information from these sources as a result of poor information literacy skills (Jamila & Maidabino, 2017). Some undergraduates seem to have an inability to identify what constitutes the right scholarly materials needed for their academic activities in public universities in Anambra State. Some undergraduates are unfamiliar with the right words, synonyms, concepts, and related terms to use in locating both print and non-print materials for their studies. Some undergraduates appear to have difficulties in using quality scholarly works probably due to low knowledge of how to determine the worth of information in public universities in Anambra State. Low utilization of electronic information resources by undergraduates could largely be attributed to low level of information literacy skills (Nwalo & Babarinde, 2022). Students with low levels of information literacy skills could not search and apply available information resources to carry out their academic and research works.

Statement of the Problem

There are some information resources that seem to be underutilized by undergraduate in public universities in Anambra State. Some information resources tend to remain underutilized possibly because undergraduates could hardly locate and apply them in solving their academic problems. The root cause of difficulties encountered by students in accessing essential information resources to enhance their study is probably due to shortages of relevant skills. It is worrisome that some students get frustrated and feel anxiety in trying to search, identify and retrieve the right information sources in the academic libraries in public universities in Anambra

State. It is regrettable to note that some students appear to fall short of the abilities to assess and know the value of information required to carry out their academic activities. It is based on these problems that the study was conducted to investigate the extent of the application of information literacy skills among undergraduates of library and information science in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study was to investigate the extent of the application of information literacy skills among undergraduates of library and information science in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to find out:

1. The extent of application of information identification skills by undergraduates
2. The extent of application of information search skills by undergraduates.
3. The extent to which information evaluation skills are applied by undergraduates
4. The extent to which information utilization skills are applied by undergraduates.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the extent to which information identification skills are applied by undergraduates of library and information science in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria?
2. What is the extent to which information search skills are applied by undergraduates of library and information science in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria?
3. What is the extent to which information evaluation skills are applied by undergraduates of library and information science in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria?
4. What is the extent to which information utilization skills are applied by undergraduates of library and information science in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria?

Methods

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised of all the undergraduates in the Department of Library and Information Science in two public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria. A proportionate stratified sampling technique was used to draw a sample size of 241 undergraduates for the study. A researcher-developed questionnaire titled 'Application of Information Literacy Skills Questionnaire (AILSQ)' was used for data collection. The instrument was developed based on literature reviewed and consultation with experts in the field. AILSQ has clusters I-IV. Cluster I had five items on information identification skills, Cluster II contained eight items on

information search skills, Cluster III which focused on information evaluation skills had five items, and Cluster IV had five items on information utilization skills. The instrument has 23 items structured on a four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D); Strongly Disagree (SD) weighted 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively.

A total of 241 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents and 235 copies representing 98% were properly completed and successfully retrieved. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The decision criteria is that any mean scores ranging from 3.50-4.00 were taken to indicate VHE, 2.50-3.49 was taken to indicate HE, 1.50-2.49 was taken to indicate LE, and 1.00-1.49 was taken to indicate VLE respectively.

Results

The extent to which information identification skills are applied by undergraduates of library and information science in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores on the extent to which Information Identification Skills are applied by Undergraduates

S/ N	ITEMS	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Sd	Remarks
1	Know when information is needed for academic task	235	1.00	4.00	2.67	1.04	High Extent
2	Define the needed information for coursework	235	1.00	4.00	2.54	0.97	High Extent
3	Recognize where to find the needed information	235	1.00	4.00	2.48	1.00	Low Extent
4	Get familiar information to be used for my assignment	235	1.00	4.00	2.51	1.10	High Extent
5	Select the information that is most appropriate to meet specific needs	235	1.00	4.00	2.60	1.11	High Extent
Mean of means			1.00	4.00	2.56	1.04	High Extent

Result in Table 1 showed that the mean scores of undergraduates for all the items except 3 fell within the mean range of 2.50-2.49 and this indicated the high extent to which they applied the listed identification skills. The cluster standard deviation score of 1.04 shows homogeneity in the mean ratings of undergraduates. The cluster mean of 2.56 fell within the mean range of 2.50-2.49 and this shows that identification skills are to a high extent applied by undergraduates of library and information science in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria.

The extent to which information search skills are applied by undergraduates of library and information science in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores on the extent to which Information Search Skills are applied by Undergraduates

S/N	ITEMS I have the ability to						Remarks
		N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Sd	
1.	Use different kinds of search engines	235	1.00	4.00	2.54	1.05	High Extent
2.	Apply the right terminology for searching for information	235	1.00	4.00	2.40	1.03	Low Extent
3.	Use the library catalogue to search for information	235	1.00	4.00	2.55	1.08	High Extent
4.	Reframe the research topic to search for information	235	1.00	4.00	2.37	1.06	Low Extent
5.	Use keywords to search for information	235	1.00	4.00	2.41	1.01	Low Extent
6.	Use different databases to search for information	235	1.00	4.00	2.45	1.11	Low Extent
7.	Get specific information through the book index	235	1.00	4.00	2.42	1.09	Low Extent
8.	Use subject matters to search for information	235	1.00	4.00	2.53	1.10	High Extent
Mean of means			1.00	4.00	2.46	1.07	Low Extent

Table 2 indicated that the mean scores of undergraduates for items 6, 8, and 13 fell within the mean range of 2.50-2.49 and this indicated the high extent to which they applied the listed search skills. On the other hand, the mean scores recorded by undergraduates for items 7, 9, 10, 11, and 12 fell within the mean range of 2.49-1.50 and this indicated the low extent to which they applied the listed search skills. The cluster standard deviation score of 1.07 shows homogeneity in the mean ratings of undergraduates. The cluster mean of 2.46 fell within the mean range of 2.49-1.50 and this shows that search skills are to a low extent applied by undergraduates of library and information science in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria.

The extent to which information evaluation skills are applied by undergraduates of library and information science in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores on the extent to which Information Evaluation Skills are applied by Undergraduates

S/ N	ITEMS I have the ability to	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Sd	Remarks
1.	Critically appraise the objectivity of information obtained from the internet	235	1.00	4.00	2.36	1.03	Low Extent
2.	Appraise the reliability of information obtained from textbooks	235	1.00	4.00	2.43	1.08	Low Extent
3.	Assess the authenticity of information from print and electronic sources	235	1.00	4.00	2.46	1.12	Low Extent
4.	Review the relevance of database sources	235	1.00	4.00	2.44	1.06	Low Extent
5.	Assess the credibility of the information sources.	235	1.00	4.00	2.39	1.02	Low Extent
Mean of means			1.00	4.00	2.42	1.06	Low Extent

As shown in table 3 indicated that the mean scores of undergraduates for all items fell within the mean range of 2.49-1.50 and this indicated the low extent to which they applied the listed evaluation skills. The cluster standard deviation score of 1.06 shows homogeneity in the mean ratings of undergraduates. The cluster mean of 2.42 fell within the mean range of 2.49-1.50 and this shows that search skills are to a low extent applied by undergraduates of library and information science in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria.

The extent to which information utilization skills are applied by undergraduates of library and information science in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores on the extent to which Information Utilization Skills are applied by Undergraduates

S/N	ITEMS I have the ability to	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Sd	Remarks
1.	Use retrieved information to solve a real problem	235	1.00	4.00	2.64	1.07	High Extent
2.	Use information in conducting research	235	1.00	4.00	2.70	1.03	High Extent
3.	Utilize summarized ideas from information gathered from different sources in doing an assignment	235	1.00	4.00	2.61	1.05	High Extent
4.	Incorporate newly gathered information with previous ones for compiling course materials	235	1.00	4.00	2.42	1.08	Low Extent
5.	Use the information to advance knowledge	235	1.00	4.00	2.68	1.00	High Extent
Mean of means			1.00	4.00	2.61	1.05	High Extent

Table 4 showed that the mean scores of undergraduates for all the items except 22 fell within the mean range of 2.50-2.49 and this indicated the high extent to which they applied the listed information utilization skills. The cluster standard deviation score of 1.04 shows homogeneity in the mean ratings of undergraduates. The cluster mean of 2.61 fell within the mean range of 2.50-2.49 and this indicated that information utilization skills are to a high extent applied by undergraduates of library and information science in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Discussion

The finding of the study revealed that identification skills are to a high extent applied by undergraduates of library and information science in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria. This agreed with the finding of Ikonne, Ibikunle and Babalola (2023) which showed that information identification skills are applied to a high extent in university libraries. This agreed with the findings could be connected to the fact that the studies were conducted at university level in the same country. The information identification skills applied to a high extent by undergraduates of library and information science in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria were abilities to know when information is needed for academic tasks, define the needed information for course works, get familiarize information to be used for my assignment and select the information that is most appropriate to meet specific needs. The possible explanation for the information identification skills by undergraduates could be due to fact that there are specific academic tasks and issues to be addressed through information.

The finding of the study revealed that search skills are to a low extent applied by undergraduates of library and information science in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria. This is in agreement with the finding of Murthy and Padmini (2018) which revealed that students rarely used search engines to locate both print and non-print materials. This disagreed with the finding of Onanuga, Amuda and Ilori (2021) which showed that search skills are applied to a high extent by librarians of academic libraries in universities. This difference in geographical location and time could be responsible for the disagreement with the finding. The information search skills applied to a low extent by undergraduates of library and information science in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria were capacities to apply the right terminology for searching for information, reframe research topics to search for information, use keywords to search for information get specific information through the book index. This shows that some undergraduates have sufficient skills of how to locate vital information for their academic and research activities.

The finding of the study revealed that evaluation skills are to a low extent applied by undergraduates of library and information science in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria. This is contrary to the finding of Murthy and Padmini (2018) which indicated that students to a high extent apply information evaluation skills. The disagreement with the findings could be attributed to the fact that the studies were conducted in different countries at various times. The information evaluation skills applied to a low extent by undergraduates of library and information

science in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria include: abilities to critically appraise the objectivity of information gotten from the internet, appraise the reliability of information obtained from textbooks, assess the authenticity of the information from print and electronic sources, review the relevance of database sources and assess the credibility of the information sources. This shows that some undergraduates are not concerned about the credibility and authenticity of the information they apply in their academic and research works.

The finding of the study revealed that utilization skills are to a high extent applied by undergraduates of library and information science in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria. This is in line with the findings of Ikonne, Ibikunle and Babalola (2023) which showed that information utilization skills are applied to a high extent in university libraries. This also supported the finding of Mabruka and Yahya (2019) which showed that utilization skills are applied among university undergraduates. The agreement in findings is probably because the studies were conducted at the university level which has similarities in information literacy programs in the same country. The information utilization skills applied to a high extent by undergraduates of library and information science in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria were abilities to use the retrieved information to solve a real problem, use information in conducting research, utilize summarize ideas from information gathered from different sources in doing assignment and use information in advancing knowledge. The undergraduates apply information utilization skills because every academic activity requires information for successful completion.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. National Universities Commission should mandate universities to integrate a course on information literacy skills in the Departments of Library and Information Science academic curricula to improve the skills and knowledge of students in the area.
2. Management of university libraries should invite resource persons to periodically enlighten students on information identification skills.
3. Heads of Departments of Library and Information Science in various universities should organize periodic workshops to upgrade the knowledge and skills of undergraduates in information search.
4. University management should carry out enlightenment programs through mass media to create awareness of the need for information evaluation to enhance the use of the right information for academic and research activities.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it is concluded that some information literacy skills are to a high extent applied by undergraduates of library and information science in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria. Undergraduates have abilities to identify their information and utilize the available resources but have insufficient skills to search and evaluate the worthwhile of information from various sources. Undergraduates with information literacy skills can find the right kind of intellectual output to fulfil their information needs for lifelong learning and problem-solving.

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