

Assessing Information Literacy Competencies of Fresh Students at Bauchi State University Gadau: Insights from the Library Environment

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ABSTRACT: *The purpose of this study is to understand the levels of freshers' information literacy skills at Bauchi State University Gadau, Nigeria. This study was conducted using cross sectional survey research method A questionnaire developed was used for data collection, and the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics of percentages and frequencies that was described in chart formats. The target population in this study comprise of 3,236 freshers during the 2022/2023 academic session of Bauchi State University Gadau. Based on the simple random sampling method, the sample size is three hundred and forty-four (344) as determined by the statistical formulation provided by Yamane (1967). The findings showed that the freshers acquire information literacy skills during orientation, workshops or from course syllabus. the study also found that freshers at Bauchi State University Gadau do not have the proper understanding of the concept of information literacy and cannot identify credible sources of information. Thus, this study recommends that more formal training programmes concerning information literacy skills need to be integrated into freshers' curriculum to support the students learning and can improve their understanding of the concept of information literacy skills.*

KEYWORDS: information literacy, freshers, information literacy skills, understanding

INTRODUCTION

Information literacy skills are sets of abilities that require individuals to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information (ACRL, 2020). The document points out that the information literacy skills were created deliberately to reinforce the above abilities. As interest in information literacy continues to build the scholarly discussion has begun to consider how information literacy can develop using the latest technology to adapt to diverse students' learning styles.

Information literacy skills are initiated in the higher education of learning and have taken a variety of forms of stand-alone courses or classes, web-based tutorials, course-related instruction, or course-integrated instruction. Moreover, freshers need to know when information is needed and abilities to recognize good sources of information, locate relevant information, and communicate it effectively. This will enable them to achieve good academic grades, facilitate their research process, improve their long-term self-reliant learning competence and satisfy their immediate information need within the shortest time possible. Thus, the main goal of this study is to understand the level of information literacy skills that the freshers possess to successfully execute the task of information inquiries using both online and hardcopies resources and to ethically distinguish between authentic information resources for their research and assignment.

Freshers are often new to academic research and assignments; they may struggle to develop information literacy skills, and information skills are critical for academic success and lifelong learning. Hence, numerous studies have shown that information literacy skills will improve academic performance, increase employability, and promote lifelong learning. To understand the freshers' information literacy skills, instructors need to incorporate them for effective delivery and promoting critical thinking and reflection. Ojo and Adebayo (2021) affirmed that information literacy skills has been considered as an ability to locate and use information effectively from widespread sources, including electronic databases, journals, books, and the internet. The study will understand information literacy skills on the importance of critical evaluation and proper citations among freshers of Bauchi State University Gadau. Freshers have frequently relied on their knowledge and experience when searching for information rather than utilizing more effective research strategies. The previous study highlights the importance of information literacy instruction for fresher students as it can assist them develop effective research strategies and avoid relying solely on personal knowledge and experience.

The present study has observed that the freshers of Nigerian higher institutions face difficulty in identifying and selecting appropriate sources for research assignments, and they lack knowledge on how to properly cite the reference sources, and they also have limited knowledge to critically evaluate the information for credibility and reliability as well as inabilities to use library resources and other databases effectively. This study aims to understand the freshers' information literacy skills in terms of skills acquired and difficulty faced to provide strategies that improve their

information literacy skills. It is also the aim of this study to understand the freshers' information literacy skills and whether the information literacy skills perceived will assist them to become independent learners in the usage of information resources and services.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies have been carried out on information literacy in among university systems and the need for them cannot be overemphasized because of the relevance of the topic to the students and staff of the institutions and the need for the skills for life-long learning. A review of some of these literatures which are relevant to this study are done thematically in order to assess the freshers' information literacy competencies in academic libraries. According to Hosein (2020), the University of West Indies recognized the importance of information literacy and decided to develop a comprehensive information literacy programme in the university. The study urged that the University of the West Indies St Augustine Campus will identify lifelong learning by ensuring that individuals have intellectual abilities of reasoning and critical thinking as well as being able to construct a framework for learning. On a similar note, Akinpelu and Daramola (2020) conducted a study on information literacy skills among newly admitted undergraduate students at Obafemi Awolowo University in Nigeria. The study found that the students lacked the necessary skills to search and evaluate information effectively. In contrary opinion, Julien and Barker (2020) noted that students who mastered advanced information literacy skills have better performance in their academic grades. This corresponds to the study of Ezeani and Ezeani (2020) who conducted the study on the information literacy skills among undergraduate students in Nigerian universities. The study found that the majority of students had basic information literacy skills. Equally, Brink (2020) conducted a study on information literacy skills among undergraduate students at one of South African Universities. The research found that the students had some basic information literacy skills. This contrasts with the findings of Lippincott (2020) that the information literacy instruction for undergraduates needs to be redesigned to shape information needs.

Thus, based on the previous studies, it is discovered that information literacy skills are increasingly assessing among students due to the amount of information accessed in a digital format. However, few findings suggest that information literacy needs to be redesigned with new areas that develop students' citation skills. Hence, this study needs to assess the strengths and weaknesses of freshers in terms of information literacy skills in order to find out about the freshers' competencies in using the library and information resources at Bauchi State University libraries.

Statement of the Problems

In universities, freshmen lack adequate information literacy skills essential for locating, evaluating, and effectively utilizing academic resources. Many freshmen rely heavily on internet search engines rather than utilizing library resources, leading to a deficiency in their ability to discern reliable information sources. Moreover, a significant number of freshmen experience

library anxiety, hindering their engagement with library facilities and services. Mohammed (2021) highlighted that undergraduate students often avoid university libraries due to insufficient knowledge, skills, and comfort with library routines, thereby impacting their academic performance and self-directed learning abilities.

Freshmen need to develop timely recognition of information needs, competence in identifying credible sources, and proficiency in accessing and utilizing information effectively. These competencies are crucial for achieving academic success, enhancing research capabilities, fostering long-term learning independence, and promptly meeting academic demands.

Therefore, this study aims to assess the information literacy skills of freshmen at Bauchi State University Gadau, examining their ability to conduct comprehensive information inquiries using both online and physical resources. Additionally, the study seeks to explore freshmen's capacity to ethically discern authentic information sources for their academic research and assignments.

Objectives of the Study

This research will seek to achieve the following objectives:

1. To assess the levels of freshers' information literacy skills at Bauchi State University Gadau library.
2. To explore how the freshers acquire information literacy skills at Bauchi State University Gadau library.
3. To determine the challenges faces freshers in developing information literacy skills at Bauchi State University Gadau library.
4. To provide some strategies that can improve the freshers' competencies in terms of information literacy skills at Bauchi State University Gadau library.

Research Questions

This research will answer the following questions:

1. What are the levels of freshers' information literacy skills at Bauchi State University Gadau library?
2. How do freshers acquire information literacy skills at Bauchi State University Gadau library?
3. What are the challenges faced by the freshers in developing information literacy skills at Bauchi State University Gadau library?
4. What are the strategies that will improve the freshers' competencies in terms of information literacy skills at Bauchi State University Gadau library?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted using a cross-sectional survey research design. This research design enables the researcher to obtain information using self-administered questionnaires. The target population of this study consists of 3,236 freshers during the 2022/2023 academic session of

Bauchi State University Gadau. (Source: admission office Bauchi State University, Gadau). Simple random sampling method was used to draw the sample size of 344 relying on a statistical formulation provided by Yamane (1967). The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics of percentages and frequencies in tables and chats.

RESULTS

This section reports the data collected and the results of the study. The data were analyzed to answer the respective research questions in line with research objectives.

Demographic Information: The sample of this study consists of three hundred and forty-four (344) respondents. The data in Table 1.1. Showed that the majority of the respondents were male (53.8%) followed by female (46.2%). The data on age bracket distribution shows that more than half of the respondents (57.0%) were between the age bracket of 20 – 24 years old, followed by 23.4% between 15 – 19 years and 20.0% between 25 and above years old. Lastly, the data departmental-wise in the faculty of education shows that 55.2% were from the Department of Science Education, followed by 44.8% from Library and Information Science. (See Table 1.1).

Table 1.1: Demographic Information of the respondents (n=344)

Group	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Males	185	53.8
Females	159	46.2
Age		
15 – 19	79	23.0
20 – 24	196	57.0
25&above	69	20.0
Departments		
Library & Information Science	154	44.8
Science Education	190	55.2

Research Question 1: What is the levels of freshers' information literacy skills at Bauchi State University Gadau library?

Chart 1: To assess the levels of freshers' information literacy skills at Bauchi State University Gadau library.

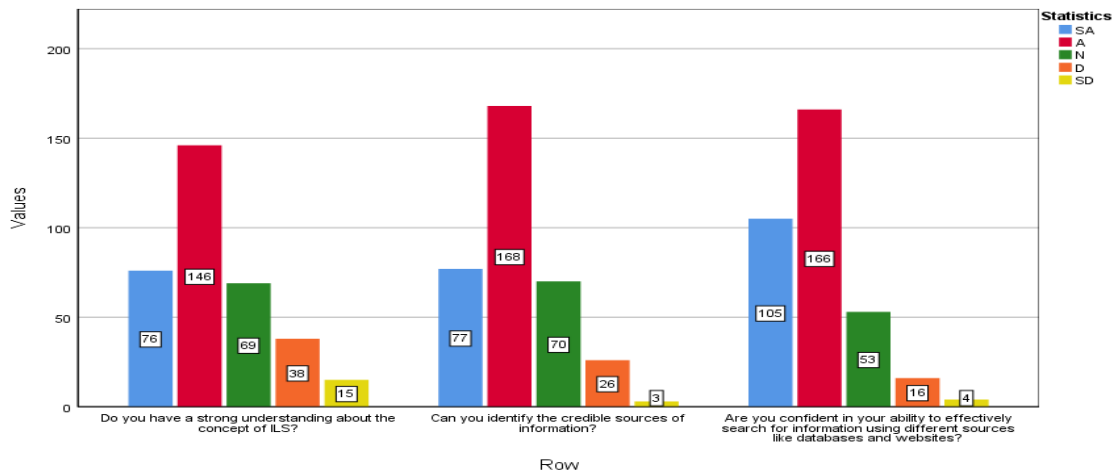


Chart 1: Levels of freshers Information Literacy Skills

To assess the levels of freshers’ information literacy skills at Bauchi State University Gadau, Nigeria based on the multiple choices given. The findings indicated that most of the freshers from the faculty of education have a higher level of information literacy perceived at the BASUG library. Data from the survey showed that the majority of freshers understood information literacy skills by indicating agreement on the three items. In the survey, 222(64.5%) of the respondents agreed that they had comprehended the concept of ILS while 53(15.5%) disagreed with the statement and very few of the respondents 38(11.0%) chose undecided. However, in response to “identify the credible sources of information” a cumulative number of 245(71.2%) of the respondents agreed that they could identify the credible sources of information while 29(8.5%) of them disagreed with the statement and 26(7.6%) of the respondents choose undecided. Again, in response to “confidence and ability to effectively search information using many sources” 271(78.8%) of respondents agreed while 20(5.9%) were in disagreement with the statement and only 16(4.7%) chose undecided. Thus, this shows that the ILS has a positive impact on the majority of the respondents who attended the ILS course at Bauchi State University library.

Research Question 2: How do freshers acquire information literacy skills at Bauchi State University Gadau Library Nigeria?

Chart 2: To explore how freshers acquire information literacy skills at Bauchi State University Gadau library.

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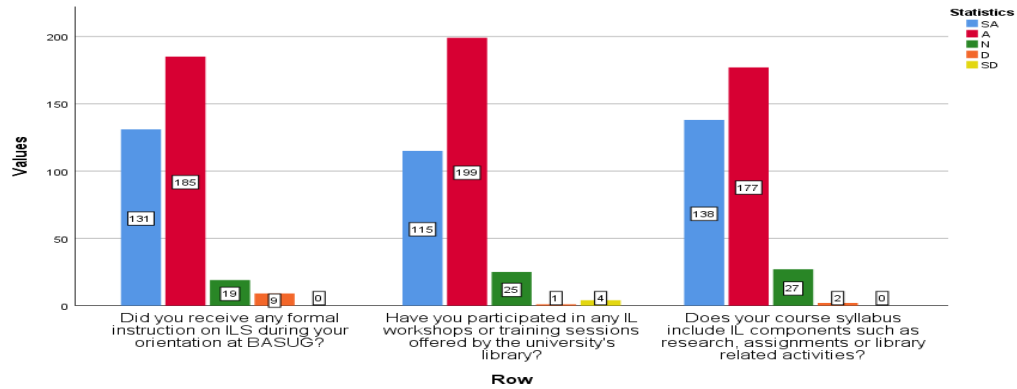


Chart 2: Acquiring Information Literacy Skills by Freshers

To find out how the freshers acquire information literacy skills at BASUG library. Out of multiple answers recorded, a cumulative number of 316(91.9%) agreed that they acquired formal instruction of information literacy skills during orientation at BASUG while 19(5.5%) of respondents chose undecided, only 9(2.6%) of the respondents disagreed with this statement. 314(91.2%) agreed that they have participated in any information literacy workshop training sessions offered by the university library, while 25(7.3%) of the respondents were chosen undecided, and very few of 5(1.5%) disagreed with this statement. However, in response to “whether the respondents' course syllabus includes IL components such as research, assignments or library-related activities”, cumulative answers of 315(91.6%) agreed while 27(7.8%) chose undecided, and only 2(.6%) disagreed with the statement. Thus, the overall findings show that information literacy was acquired by the freshers either during orientation, workshop or receiving part of the course syllabus include information literacy components such as research, assignments or library related activities.

Research Question 3: What are the challenges faced the freshers in developing information literacy skills at Bauchi State University Gadau library?

Chart 3: To determine the challenges faced the freshers in developing information literacy skills at Bauchi State University Gadau, Nigeria.

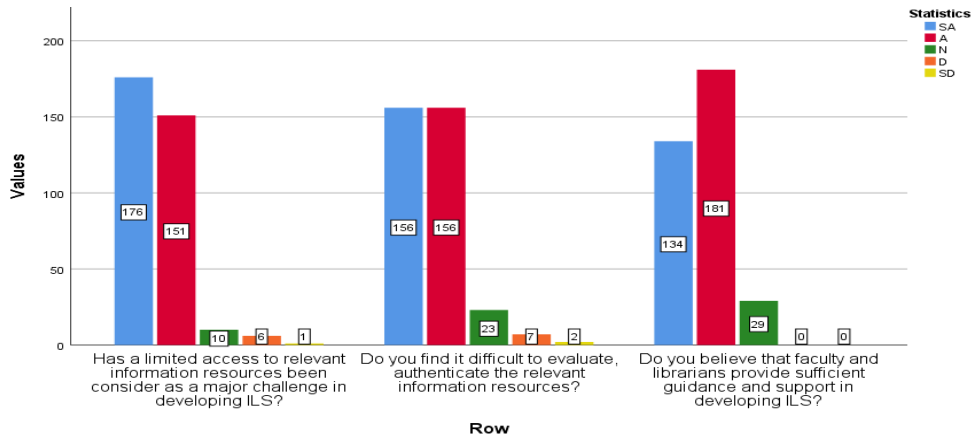


Chart 3: Challenges faced by freshers in developing ILS

The responses in Chart 3 revealed the challenges faced by the freshers in developing information literacy skills at Bauchi State University Gadau, Nigeria. It has revealed that 327(95.1%) agreed that the limited access to relevant information resources was the major challenge faced when developing information literacy skills while 10(2.9%) chose undecided, and only 7(2.0%) disagreed with the statement. Again, in response to finding it difficult to evaluate and authenticate the relevant information sources, the majority of the respondents 312 (90.6%) agreed that they are facing challenges when evaluating and authenticating the relevant information sources, while 23(6.7%) indicated undecided and only 9(2.6%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement. This shows that the freshers have serious issue when evaluating and authenticating information sources. Moreover, the study revealed that 315(91.6%) agreed that faculty and librarians provide sufficient guidance and support in developing information literacy skills, while 29(8.4%) chose undecided, and no respondents have disagreed.

Research Question 4: What are strategies that will improve the freshers’ competencies in terms of information literacy skills at Bauchi State University Gadau library?

Chart 4: To provide some strategies that can improve freshers’ competencies in terms of information literacy skills at Bauchi State University Gadau library.

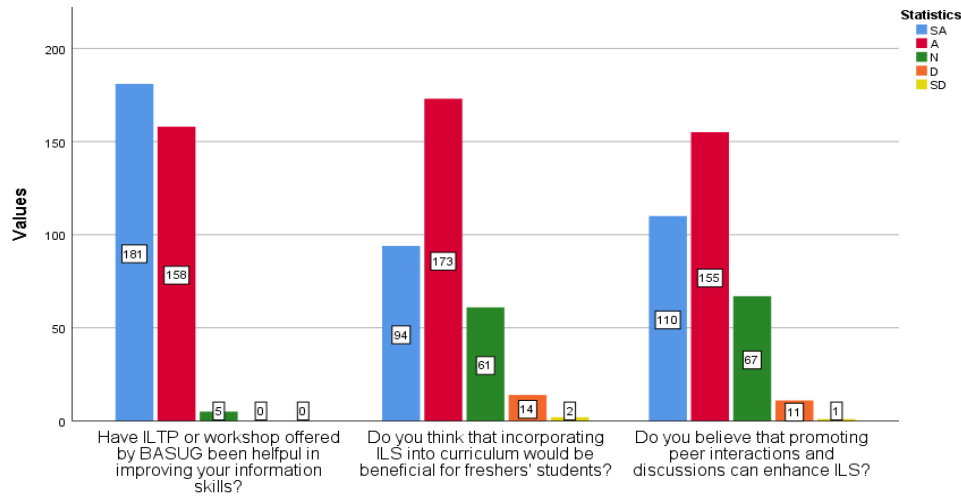


Chart 4: Strategies for improving freshers' competencies

Chart 4 revealed the strategies that can improve the freshers' competencies in terms of information literacy skills at Bauchi State University Gadau, Nigeria. It shows that 339(98.5%) of the respondents agreed that information literacy training programmes and workshops offered to freshers assist them in improving their information skills, only 5(1.5%) were chosen undecided and no one disagrees with the statement. 267(77.6%) of the respondents agreed to incorporate information literacy skills into their curriculum, while 61(17.7%) chose undecided and only 16(4.7%) disagreed with the statement. However, in response to “enhance ILS through promoting peer interactions and discussion among freshers” the majority of the respondents 265 (77.1%) agreed with the statement, while 67(19.5%) chose undecided and only 12(3.5%) disagreed. Thus, the current study agreed on three strategies to improve freshers' information literacy competencies. The study found that fresher students at Bauchi State University Gadau do not have proper understanding of the concept of information literacy and cannot identify credible sources of information.

DISCUSSION

The study revealed that freshers understood the information literacy skills through orientations, workshops and other formal instruction about information literacy skills in the university. It further revealed that limited access to relevant resources has been the major challenge in developing information literacy skills among freshers and most of the freshers have faced some challenges in terms of evaluating the reliability and relevance of information sources. This corresponds with findings of Akinpelu and Daramola (2020) who revealed that lack of necessary skills for searching, and evaluating information effectively were considered as major issues affecting newly admitted undergraduate students at Obafemi Awolawo university. The study also revealed that integrating

information literacy skills into freshers' curriculum would be an advantage and promote peer interactions and discussions to enhance information literacy skills competencies among freshers.

CONCLUSION

Information literacy skills have become an indispensable tool for the achievement of effective learning in higher institutions. The purpose of this study is to understand the levels of freshers' information literacy skills at Bauchi State University Gadau, Nigeria. Thus, the overall findings show that information literacy were acquired by the freshers either during orientation, workshop or receive part of the course syllabus.

The current study affirmed the level of information literacy among freshers of Bauchi State University Gadau, as the majority of the respondents have difficulty of identify credible sources of information. The study found that fresh students in Bauchi state university Gadau do not have proper understanding of the concept of information literacy and cannot identify credible sources of information. Before they acquired information literacy skills.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations were made:

- I. More formal training programmes concerning information literacy skills need to be introduced for freshers in the university. This will support the students learning and can improve their understanding about the concept of information literacy skills.
- II. University management should strive to improve access to relevant resources such as access of books, journals and references materials, while integrating information literacy skills into the curriculum will also encourage peer interactions and discussions to foster a more information-literate community.
- III. Students in their early stage of university education should be exposed to preliminary research activities in order to enhance their knowledge of concepts such as copy right, the ability to effectively quote and paraphrase an already existing work as well as been able to use information without plagiarizing.

Acknowledgment

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