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AN ASSESSMENT OF INFORMATION LITERACY SKILLS AND INFORMATION RETRIEVAL AND UTILIZATION AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF MOSES ORSHIO ADASU UNIVERSITY, MAKURDI MOAUM

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Abstract
This study assessed the information literacy skills, information retrieval practices, and utilization of academic resources among undergraduate students of Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi (MOAUM). Guided by the ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards, the study employed a descriptive survey research design, targeting a stratified random sample of 600 students across various faculties. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Findings revealed that students possessed a moderate level of information literacy skills (cluster mean = 2.72), with limited formal training being a major gap. Information retrieval abilities were rated high (mean = 2.67), with students demonstrating familiarity with OPAC and digital repositories. Utilization of resources was frequent (mean = 2.80), with internet-based sources being the most accessed. However, challenges such as inadequate training, poor internet connectivity, limited access to databases, and low awareness of available resources were identified (mean = 2.83). The study fills a gap left by previous research by offering a broader and more holistic view of students' engagement with both print and electronic resources, institutional support systems, and practical information use across all faculties. Recommendations include mandatory literacy training, improved digital infrastructure, and curriculum integration of retrieval and utilization skills. The findings underscore the need for targeted interventions to enhance students' academic performance through improved access and application of information resources. This study contributes to the growing discourse on library resource effectiveness in Nigerian universities and informs strategies for strengthening research competence and lifelong learning among undergraduates.
Keywords: Information Literacy Skills, Information Retrieval, Information Utilization

Introduction

In the evolving information landscape, university libraries have transitioned from merely providing physical books to facilitating access to a wide range of digital and academic resources. A key element of this shift is the importance of information literacy, which is crucial for undergraduate students for their academic development, research abilities, and lifelong learning. Information literacy equips students to confidently engage with scholarly resources, think critically, and make informed academic choices (Chukwusa, 2021). At Moses Orshio Adasu University in Makurdi, students often depend on library and digital resources for various

academic tasks, but their success is contingent upon their skills in effectively retrieving and utilizing relevant information. Access to resources like Online Public Access Catalogues (OPAC), electronic journals, digital databases, and institutional repositories necessitates that students demonstrate the ability to identify credible sources and synthesize information across various platforms. However, existing evidence indicates that many undergraduates struggle with navigating information systems, attributed to limited training in information literacy, inadequate digital search skills, and a lack of awareness regarding available library services (Aduba & Mayowa-Adebara, 2022). These issues lead to a decreased utilization of library resources, an overreliance on general internet searches, and resultant low-quality academic outputs. Therefore, assessing students' information literacy skills is essential for evaluating their capacity to retrieve and apply academic information in the university context. This study focuses on assessing these skills among undergraduate students at Moses Orshio Adasu University, aiming to understand their influence on information retrieval and usage. The findings will provide practical recommendations for enhancing library instruction, improving resource accessibility, and elevating students' academic performance through targeted support and policy reforms.

Statement of the Problem

Many students in today's academic environment face increasing demands to navigate diverse sources of information—both digital and print—to meet the requirements of research, assignments, and scholarly projects. At Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi, concerns have emerged over students' ability to retrieve and utilize academic resources effectively despite the availability of advanced library tools like OPAC, electronic databases, and institutional repositories. Several factors contribute to these challenges, including limited ICT competencies, inadequate user orientation, insufficient integration of information literacy into academic programs, and low awareness of library offerings. As a result, students may resort to unreliable sources, leading to poor academic output and underutilization of the university's library resources. This study seeks to examine the information literacy skills of undergraduate students and how these competencies influence their ability to retrieve and use relevant information. The insights gained will inform strategies to improve library instruction, academic support services, and curriculum development aimed at fostering better research practices and academic success.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to the study:

1. What is the level of information literacy skills possessed by undergraduate students of Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi?
2. To what extent do undergraduate students of Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi effectively retrieve academic information from available library resources?
3. How frequently do undergraduate students of Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi utilize information resources for academic purposes?
4. What are the major challenges affecting information literacy, retrieval, and utilisation among undergraduate students of Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi?

Review of Related Literature

Conceptual Framework

The following concepts were discussed in line with the study:

Information Literacy Skills

Information literacy skills are crucial for students, enabling them to effectively identify, locate, evaluate, and utilize information across academic, professional, and personal contexts. Alex-Nmecha and Ejitagha (2023) point out that these competencies extend beyond mere library familiarity to a comprehensive understanding of information organization, critical assessment of credibility, and ethical integration into academic work. In an era filled with both credible and misleading sources, acquiring such skills is vital for informed decision-making and maintaining scholarly integrity, especially at the undergraduate level where they significantly impact academic success. Bawack and Kamdjoug (2020) highlight that students proficient in information literacy are better prepared for independent research, scholarly writing, and engaging discussions. These skills can be developed through formal education, such as library user training and integrated information literacy courses, as well as through informal experiences and peer interactions.

Furthermore, Anunobi and Ukwoma (2016) emphasize that information literacy is a dynamic skill that evolves with advancements in technology and the digitization of academic resources. As a result, academic libraries must implement proactive strategies to weave information literacy into their educational frameworks by collaborating with faculty, designing specific tutorials, and providing ongoing support through various platforms. In the context of Moses Orshio Adasu University, students frequently involved in research and projects depend heavily on these skills. Without them, distinguishing between legitimate scholarly sources and non-scholarly materials can become challenging, leading to potential misunderstandings and unintentional plagiarism. Flint et al. (2024) assert that effective information literacy fosters not only better academic performance but also lifelong learning and adaptability. Therefore, enhancing information literacy should be a primary focus for university libraries and academic departments, which includes offering structured learning experiences, ensuring diverse resource access, and embedding critical thinking throughout the academic process. Empowering students to confidently and ethically manage information markedly enhances their educational experiences and outcomes.

Information Retrieval

Effective information retrieval is a crucial academic skill that allows individuals to efficiently find and acquire relevant materials from varied sources. According to Tyopev et al. (2021), this skill extends beyond library system usage, requiring a strategic approach to searching for scholarly resources through tools such as Online Public Access Catalogues (OPAC), search engines, subject databases, e-journals, institutional repositories, and digital libraries, which are essential for enhancing research productivity. For undergraduate students, mastering information retrieval techniques is vital for academic success, as it facilitates access to necessary resources for assignments and research projects. Daramola (2016) highlights that students' success is closely linked to their understanding of search techniques like keyword searches, Boolean logic, truncation, and filtering, noting that a lack of these skills could lead to poor-quality resource

selection.

In Nigerian universities, such as Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi (MOAUM), students encounter numerous challenges impeding effective information retrieval, including unawareness of library resources, inadequate training, and poor internet infrastructure, as stated by Echem and Udo-Anyanwu (2018). These issues can diminish student engagement with library services despite the presence of ample academic resources. To enhance information retrieval among students, a holistic strategy is necessary, involving user education, improved system usability, and infrastructural improvements. Academic libraries should conduct orientation sessions, practical training, and continuous workshops aimed at developing students' retrieval skills. Furthermore, librarians should partner with faculty to integrate information retrieval skills into the curriculum, enabling students to practically apply these competencies in academic settings. As Mahmood (2016) points out, equipping students with such skills not only meets their current academic needs but also sets the foundation for future research and lifelong learning.

Information Utilisation

In the academic context, the significance of information extends beyond its mere retrieval; it lies in its adept application to address problems, complete assignments, and enhance learning outcomes. As universities continue to expand their digital and print collections, the focus should transition from simply accessing information to understanding how students utilize the available resources. Information utilization is crucial in this evolution, functioning as the connection between acquiring knowledge and achieving academic productivity. The concept of information utilization encompasses the process in which students apply retrieved information to engage in academic, personal, or professional endeavors. According to Ekong and Ekong (2018), this entails not just locating information, but also interpreting, synthesizing, integrating, and ethically employing acquired data in significant ways, including writing essays, conducting research, and bolstering academic arguments. Demonstrating effective utilization shows a student's capacity to convert raw data into knowledge, invoking critical thinking and contextual relevance.

In particular, undergraduates' academic achievements are closely linked to how effectively they employ information. Adeniran (2018) asserts that students who utilize information proficiently are likely to produce superior assignments, exemplify originality in their research, and critically engage with academic content. This skill set can be further cultivated through training in referencing styles, plagiarism avoidance, and the use of citation management tools, ensuring that students incorporate information responsibly and transparently. Nonetheless, numerous challenges impede effective information utilization, particularly in Nigerian universities, such as Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi (MOAUM). Barriers include limited access to contemporary and relevant materials, insufficient digital literacy, a lack of awareness regarding information ethics, and inadequate support for academic writing. Research by Steinrücke, Veldkamp, and Jong (2020) indicates that while many students can retrieve information, they often lack the analytical and organizational prowess necessary to utilize it effectively within academic frameworks, resulting in underperformance and issues like plagiarism.

To tackle these challenges, it is imperative for university libraries and academic departments to collaborate in designing user-centered instructional programs that emphasize practical information use. Initiatives could include academic writing workshops, integration of

information utilization skills into general studies and specialized courses, and providing personalized guidance through reference and consultation services. Umesh and Sujatha (2021) highlight the importance of ongoing engagement, asserting that students gain the most benefit from consistent, context-specific support that connects information access with effective application. Ultimately, enhancing information utilization not only improves students' academic outputs but also fosters the development of independent thinkers and lifelong learners. When students can effectively apply information to solve problems, defend their viewpoints, and create new knowledge, the educational experience becomes transformational. Consequently, nurturing a culture of effective information use is vital for fulfilling institutional objectives in teaching, learning, and research excellence.

Theoretical Framework

This work adopts the Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education established by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL, 2000) to analyze the connection between information literacy skills and the information retrieval processes among undergraduate students. The standards define information literacy as a set of skills involving the reflective discovery, evaluation, and ethical use of information to create new knowledge. An information literate student is capable of determining their information needs, accessing appropriate resources, critically evaluating sources, integrating information into their knowledge base, and utilizing it ethically.

At Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi (MOAUM), these standards provide a framework for assessing students' abilities to navigate and apply various information sources effectively, aligning with the institution's objectives of promoting lifelong learning and critical research skills. The study investigates how undergraduate students recognize their information needs, locate relevant materials through tools like OPAC and databases, and utilize these resources to enhance academic performance. Additionally, it identifies barriers to effective information literacy, including limited exposure to digital tools and lack of training. Overall, the ACRL Information Literacy Standards function as both a theoretical foundation and an evaluative guide, aiming to improve students' information retrieval and usage capabilities and inform strategies for better information literacy instruction and access to academic resources at MOAUM.

Empirical Literature Review

Chukwusa (2021) investigated the information literacy skills of Library and Information Science students at Delta State University and Ambrose Alli University through a survey of 148 students. The findings indicated general information literacy but highlighted issues such as the lack of a compulsory information literacy course and insufficient complex academic tasks to evaluate skills. Contrasting Chukwusa's work, the current study assessed 600 undergraduate students at Moses Orshio Adasu University, using a 4-point Likert scale to evaluate information literacy skills, information retrieval practices, resource utilization frequency, and institutional challenges, thus offering a broader understanding of student engagement with information resources and informing curriculum development in Nigerian higher education. In another study, Umesh and Sujatha (2021) evaluated information literacy skills at Kuvempu University, India, using an ACRL standards-based questionnaire, gathering 847 responses. The results showed high library usage,

with students visiting mainly to borrow textbooks and expressing satisfaction with library resources, indicating their capability to access both print and electronic information. This study, while similar in its survey method, diverged by examining additional dimensions such as retrieval practices and institutional challenges, addressing gaps left by previous research. Tyopev, Tor-Akwer, and Tofi (2021) focused on how information retrieval skills affected the use of electronic resources among 200-level undergraduate students in Benue State. By surveying 376 respondents, they discovered that while students frequently used e-journals and internet resources, they lacked vital retrieval skills which inhibited their effective use of these resources. Key challenges included inadequate internet, inconsistent power supply, lack of awareness, and insufficient training. Compared to this narrow focus, the current study encompasses all undergraduate levels and provides a comprehensive analysis of information literacy, retrieval, utilization, and institutional barriers, thereby bridging significant literature gaps.

Alex-Nmecha and Ejitagha (2023) examined digital information literacy among final-year Library and Information Science students at six Nigerian federal universities, revealing students' confidence in internet searches but a lack of awareness of essential academic resources, such as electronic theses. Despite a preference for digital resources, many students distrusted online information for academic purposes. The current study expands this investigation to include students from all faculties at Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi, focusing on both digital and traditional resource use, information retrieval practices, and access challenges. Both studies underscored the importance of assessing information quality and incorporating information literacy into higher education. However, the present study provides a comprehensive understanding of students' engagement with print and digital resources and emphasizes the necessity for institution-wide literacy programs. Flint et al. (2024) explored the connection between information literacy and library resource use at Niger Delta University, uncovering a significant positive relationship through a correlational survey design. In contrast, the study at Moses Orshio Adasu University utilized a descriptive survey design, offering a broader perspective on information literacy and addressing institutional barriers affecting information access and utilization in Nigerian universities.

Research Methodology

The study employed a descriptive survey design to assess information literacy skills, information retrieval, and utilization among undergraduate students of Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi. A total of 600 students were selected through stratified random sampling to ensure representation across faculties and academic levels. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire divided into four sections aligned with the research questions, and responses were measured using a four-point Likert-type scale. The instrument's validity was confirmed through expert review, while its reliability yielded a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.84 after a pilot test. Data collection was carried out by the researcher and assistants, achieving a high response rate of 96.7%. Analysis was done using descriptive statistics—mean and standard deviation—with results interpreted according to predefined decision benchmarks.

Question 1. What is the level of information literacy skills possessed by Undergraduate Students of Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents on Information Literacy Skills Possessed by Undergraduate Students

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	DEC
1	Can identify my academic information needs.	200	250	90	60	2.92	0.89	Agree
2	Can access relevant academic information from various sources.	180	240	100	80	2.84	0.91	Agree
3	Can evaluate the reliability and credibility of academic sources	160	210	130	100	2.66	0.94	Agree
4	Can cite sources properly in my academic work.	170	200	120	110	2.66	0.96	Agree
5	Confident in using library resources to complete academic assignments	175	230	110	85	2.76	0.91	Agree
6	Can received formal training on information literacy in the university	140	180	150	130	2.48	0.98	Disagree
	Cluster Mean						2.72	

Key: Strongly Agree (SA = 4), Agree (A = 3), Disagree (D = 2), Strongly Disagree (SD = 1), Decision (DEC)

Table 1 reveals that the level of information literacy skills among undergraduate students is **moderate** (cluster mean = 2.72). The highest-rated skill was students' ability to identify their academic information needs ($\bar{x}$= 2.92), while the lowest was formal training on information literacy ($\bar{x}$= 2.48), suggesting a gap in institutional training programs.

Question 2. To what extent do Undergraduate Students of Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi effectively retrieve academic information from available library resources?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents on Effective Retrieval of Academic Information

S/N	Statement	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	$\bar{x}$	SD	DEC
1	Can use the library catalogue (OPAC) to locate books and materials.	160	240	100	100	2.70	0.92	High Extent
2	Can retrieve academic journals from the library's online databases.	150	230	120	100	2.66	0.93	High Extent
3	Can retrieve course-related information from library repositories.	170	220	110	100	2.74	0.91	High Extent
4	Understand the classification system used in the university library.	140	210	130	120	2.58	0.95	High Extent
5	Easy retrieval of information relevant to academic needs from the library	155	225	120	100	2.67	0.92	High Extent
6	**Cluster Mean**						2.67	

Key: Very High Extent (VHE = 4), High Extent (HE = 3), Low Extent (LE = 2), Very Low Extent (VLE = 1), Decision (DEC)

Table 2 shows that students rated the **retrieval of academic information as high** with a cluster mean of 2.67. The ability to retrieve course-related information and use OPAC scored highest, indicating that students are generally effective in navigating library tools, although classification knowledge was relatively lower ($\bar{x}$ = 2.58).

Question 3: How frequently do Undergraduate Students of Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi utilize information resources for academic purposes?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents on Frequency of Utilisation of Information Resources

S/N	Information Resources	A	O	R	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	DEC
1	Textbooks	240	200	90	70	2.91	0.87	Often
2	Reference materials (e.g., encyclopedias, dictionaries)	210	190	100	100	2.76	0.92	Often
3	Academic journals	200	180	110	110	2.71	0.93	Often
4	Electronic resources (e.g., e-journals, e-books)	180	190	120	110	2.66	0.94	Often
5	Internet-based information for academic purposes	260	210	80	50	3.03	0.82	Always
6	Library study rooms and reading spaces	220	180	100	100	2.76	0.91	Often
	Cluster Mean						2.80	

Key: Always (A = 4), Often (O = 3), Rarely (R = 2), Never (N = 1), Decision (DEC)

Table 3 shows that students **frequently use** available library and academic resources (cluster mean = 2.80). Internet-based academic information is used most consistently ($\bar{x}$ = 3.03), indicating a shift toward digital access. However, reliance on traditional resources like reference books remains strong.

Question 4. What are the major challenges affecting information literacy, retrieval, and utilisation among Undergraduate Students of Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi?

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents on Challenges Affecting Information Access and Utilisation

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	DEC
1	Inadequate information literacy training	230	220	100	60	2.94	0.85	Agree
2	Poor internet connectivity in the library	250	210	90	60	2.98	0.84	Agree
3	Lack of awareness about available library resources	200	210	120	80	2.78	0.90	Agree
4	Difficulty navigating the library's classification system	180	200	130	100	2.65	0.93	Agree
5	Limited access to electronic databases	240	190	100	80	2.88	0.89	Agree
6	Insufficient number of relevant academic materials	210	200	110	90	2.78	0.90	Agree
	Cluster Mean						2.83	

Key: Strongly Agree (SA = 4), Agree (A = 3), Disagree (D = 2), Strongly Disagree (SD = 1), Decision

(DEC)

Table 4 highlights that students face **significant challenges** in accessing and using information (cluster mean = 2.83). Top issues include **poor internet connectivity** ($\bar{x}$ = 2.98) and **lack of formal literacy training** ($\bar{x}$ = 2.94). These barriers could hinder optimal use of academic resources and require institutional attention.

Discussion of Findings

The analysis reveals that undergraduate students at Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi possess a moderate level of information literacy skills. Students demonstrate awareness of their academic information needs and are reasonably capable of locating, evaluating, and using information resources. However, a notable gap exists in formal information literacy training, which limits their capacity to engage critically with academic content and utilize resources to their full potential.

Findings further show that students are generally effective in retrieving academic information from the university library. They are familiar with tools such as the library catalogue (OPAC), repositories, and classification systems, although not without difficulties. The perceived ease of access and ability to locate course-related materials indicate that the existing library systems support student research activities.

In terms of utilisation, the results indicate a frequent use of both print and electronic resources, with internet-based academic information being the most consistently used. Textbooks, academic journals, and reference materials remain central to academic study, suggesting that the library's holdings are relevant and regularly accessed. However, digital platforms are becoming increasingly indispensable, reflecting students' evolving research behaviors.

Despite these strengths, the study highlights a range of challenges that impede optimal information literacy, retrieval, and utilization. These include poor internet connectivity, lack of awareness of available resources, limited access to electronic databases, and insufficient formal training. These issues hinder the library's effectiveness in supporting academic excellence and student learning outcomes.

Recommendations

1. The university library should implement mandatory information literacy training programs, especially during students' orientation and through regular workshops.
2. The library should simplify and reinforce access to retrieval tools such as OPAC and subject repositories through continuous user education and guided search sessions.
3. The library management should improve availability and accessibility of digital and print resources by regularly updating collections in line with academic curriculum requirements.
4. The university should invest in strengthening digital infrastructure, especially internet connectivity and database subscriptions, to remove barriers to effective resource use.

Conclusion

The study concludes that Undergraduate Students of Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi possess essential information literacy skills and make frequent use of available library resources for academic purposes. The retrieval systems in place are functional and widely used,

but several institutional challenges—especially in training, infrastructure, and resource access—affect optimal utilization. Targeted improvements, including strategic training, system support, and enhanced infrastructure, are necessary to empower students with better access to academic information and improve learning outcomes.

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