

Information Literacy Skills among Undergraduate Students at Colleges in Sindhudurg District: A Study

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ABSTRACT

The present research study evaluates information literacy skills among undergraduate students at colleges in Sindhudurg District of Maharashtra. The objectives of this study are to assess students' ability to recognize information needs, search and evaluate information resources, and understand the ethical use of information. A total of 118 students were selected using a simple random sampling method for this study. The researcher employed a descriptive survey in this study. The researcher used a structured questionnaire to collect the data from students. The data gathered from students were analyzed using simple descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentages. The findings of the study revealed that the information literacy skills among undergraduate students were good, with a mean score ranging from 3.63 to 3.73 for the four dimensions. The undergraduate students were successful in identifying the information needs and finding the needed information, evaluating information sources, and responsibly using information. Their main confidence is in the use of library databases, their ability to narrow down search results, the authors' credentials, and their ability to cite sources. However, there are still gaps in the areas of identifying scholarly sources, comprehension of plagiarism, use of OPAC, and use of citation styles..

Keywords: Information Literacy; Undergraduate students; Ethical use of information; Sindhudurg district; Citation; Plagiarism

INTRODUCTION

In today's knowledge-driven and digital society, Information Literacy has become an essential skill. It allows students to identify their information needs and to find, analyze, and apply information in an academic and personal context. In the rapidly developing digital resources and social media, students need to be able to differentiate between reliable information and misinformation and to employ information in ethically appropriate ways. Colleges and libraries are important for cultivating these skills during the use of knowledge and digital literacy programs, fostering users' critical thinking and lifelong learning. The problems still exist in the access, evaluation, and use of information among the majority of undergraduate students. Therefore, this study investigates the information literacy skills among the undergraduate students to determine the gaps in their academic and lifelong learning competency and advocate measures to improve their information literacy skills.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Ahmad and Others (2020) analyzed IL skills of the students of selected higher educational institutions. The researchers used a survey method and employed a closed-ended questionnaire to collect the data. This research study found that the majority of the students are not familiar with the concept of information literacy and the utilization of digital information resources.

Folk (2021) emphasises the significance of supportive networks, purposeful tasks, and inclusive practice in the development of learners. The results of this study highlight the importance of librarians to enhance their collaboration with teachers and integrate relationship-based, contextual approaches. Overall, it encourages greater long-term, inclusive strategies to develop the information skills of diverse students in higher education.

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Tella and Others (2021) examined information literacy skills among students of management science at the University of Ilorin, Nigeria. The researchers adopted a survey research design and collected data from 337 undergraduate students of six departments. The study reveals that the students have a high level of information literacy skills in using the internet to access the required information.

Rachael & Others (2023) explored information literacy skills among selected federal Universities in Southwest Nigeria. The researchers adopted a purposive sampling method to select the sample size. Data were collected from 1318 undergraduate students using a questionnaire. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson's product-moment correlation, multiple regression at the 0.05 level of significance, and thematic analysis. The study concluded that information literacy skills influenced undergraduate students' creativity in federal universities in southwestern Nigeria.

Akanbiemu & Idowu (2024) examined the information literacy skills of undergraduates of Bowen University, Iwo, Osun State, Nigeria. The researchers employed a descriptive survey design, and a sample of 210 undergraduate students was selected using a multistage sampling technique. The collected data were analyzed using frequency, percentages, and linear regression. The study revealed that the majority of the respondents have a high level of information literacy skills.

Delmond and Others (2024) explored the effects of general information literacy (IL) instruction on a medium-sized, public 4-year institution as measured by students' information literacy pre- and post-test scores on such dimensions as source quality, relevance, and situation. The study found differences in gains as a result of increased information literacy in various academic disciplines, with generalized instruction increasing inequities instead of bridging them among disciplines. The results indicate that there is potential to make greater progress per student in discipline-specific IL instruction and convergence across disciplines.

LeMire & Others (2024) examined information literacy skills among undergraduate students. The study reveals that information literacy skill development is not linear across class years. The study revealed that information literacy skill development is not linear across class years. The study further revealed that, by the upper-division level, first-generation students make considerable progress toward closing information literacy knowledge gaps compared with their first-generation peers.

Almutairi & AlAwadhi (2025) examined students' information literacy skills at Kuwait University. The researchers adopted a quantitative approach and survey method to collect data from students and faculty members of the College of Sharia and Islamic Studies. The data collected from 358 students and 78 faculty members were analyzed using Microsoft Excel. The study found that the majority of students were not familiar with the concept of information literacy. The study suggested that the college should include information literacy programmes in the curriculum.

Chiedu and Ogbomo (2025) examined information literacy skills and the use of library resources among 242 undergraduate students at Dennis Osadebay University Library, Nigeria, using a correlational research design. The findings showed that students had moderate to high information searching and accessing skills but low information evaluation skills. While the use of print library resources was high, the use of electronic resources was low. The study also found no significant relationship between information literacy skills and the utilization of library resources.

Hussain M. and Others (2025) studied IL skills amongst the students of the University of Science and Technology, Bannu. The researchers employed a quantitative research method and used a closed-ended questionnaire to collect the data from 330 participating students. The researchers used a convenient sampling technique to select the sample size for the research. The study found that the majority of the participating students were able to find the required information and e-resources

3. Scope: The present research study is limited to nine colleges in the Sindhudurg District of Maharashtra. The researcher has considered only Arts, Commerce, and Science colleges in the Sindhudurg District of Maharashtra

Objectives:

To assess information literacy skills among undergraduate students of colleges in Sindhudurg District.

To study students' abilities in identifying, locating, and evaluating information resources.

To study undergraduate students' awareness of ethical use of information, including plagiarism and citation practices.

To compare information literacy skills across disciplines.

To suggest measures for improving information literacy competencies among undergraduate students

Methodology: The study employed a descriptive survey method to evaluate the information literacy skills among undergraduate students of NAAC accredited colleges in Sindhudurg District of Maharashtra State. The study was limited to nine Arts, Commerce and Science Colleges; however, the study excluded B. Ed, Engineering, Management, Medical, and Agricultural colleges from its scope. A total of 125 questionnaires were administered; of these, 118 were found suitable for the analysis. The data were analyzed using simple statistical techniques such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation to assess the information literacy skills among undergraduate students.

Analysis and Interpretation

Table No. 1

Demographic Information of the Participants

Sr. No.	Gender	Frequency	Percentage
1	Male	56	47.46
2	Female	62	52.54
Total		118	100.00

The above table shows the gender-wise distribution of respondents. Out of 118 undergraduate students, 62 (52.54) were female, and 56 (47.46) were male students.

Table No 2

Identification of Information Need

Sr. No	Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	I am able to clearly define what information I need for my assignments	13	84	12	01	08	3.79	0.90
2	I can identify key concepts and keywords related to a topic	09	82	12	08	07	3.66	0.93
3	I understand the scope and depth of information required for academic work	13	80	13	08	04	3.76	0.86
4	I can differentiate between background information and research information	09	76	25	06	02	3.71	0.75

The above table shows students' ability to identify their information needs. The item 'I am able to clearly define what information I need for my assignments' has a mean score of 3.79, which indicates high level of confidence among students in identifying their information needs for their academic work. The mean score of 3.66 for the item 'I can identify key concepts and keywords related to a topic' indicates that students possess this skill but need guidance in keyword identification and searching strategies. The mean score value for the item 'I understand the scope and depth of information required for academic work' shows a good understanding of the information requirements among the respondents. The low standard deviation score

shows consistency in the responses. The item 'I can differentiate between background information and research information' has a 3.71 mean score, showing a satisfactory level of competency in information literacy. Overall, it can be concluded that students have a good level of competency in identifying information needs.

Table No. 3

Information Searching Skills								
Sr. No	Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	I know how to search information using library databases	07	93	06	05	07	3.75	0.92
2	I can effectively use keywords and Boolean operators while searching	12	73	18	14	01	3.69	0.88
3	I am able to locate books and journals using OPAC or library catalogues	08	76	19	11	04	3.62	0.92
4	I can refine search results to obtain relevant information	13	81	10	10	04	3.75	0.90
5	I can access open access scholarly resources independently	08	79	16	12	03	3.65	0.89

The table shows 'information searching skills' among students. The mean score of 3.75 for the item 'I know how to search information using library databases' shows that the majority of the students know how to search for information using library databases. The statement 'I can effectively use keywords and Boolean operators while searching' has a mean score of 3.69, indicating that most students can use keywords and Boolean operators in searching. The statement 'I am able to locate books and journals using OPAC or library catalogues' has a mean score of 3.62 and a standard deviation of 0.92, indicating that the majority of the students can locate books and journals using OPAC or library catalogues. The statement 'I can refine search results to obtain relevant information' has a high mean score of 3.75, indicating a high level of confidence among students in refining search results to obtain relevant information. The item 'I can access open access scholarly resources independently' has a mean score of 3.65, indicating that students can access open access resources independently. In general, the study shows that the students have good information searching skills.

Table No. 4

Evaluation of Information Sources								
Sr. No	Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	I can evaluate the credibility of information sources.	08	72	18	15	05	3.53	0.99
2	I check the author's credentials before using information	15	82	12	06	03	3.85	0.83
3	I can distinguish between scholarly and non-scholarly sources	09	72	13	19	05	3.52	1.00
4	I evaluate information for accuracy, relevance, and currency	11	72	15	14	06	3.58	0.99
5	I am cautious while using information from social media and websites	25	73	12	05	03	3.95	0.87

The above table provides information regarding information evaluation skills among the participating students. The statement 'I can evaluate the credibility of information sources' has a mean score of 3.53, which indicates a satisfactory level of competency in evaluating the credibility of information sources. The mean value of 3.85 for the statement 'I check the author's credentials before using information' shows that the majority of the students verify the author's qualifications before using the information. The standard deviation score of 0.83 shows consistency in responses. The statement 'I can distinguish between scholarly and non-scholarly sources' has a mean score of 3.52, indicating that most participating students can distinguish between scholarly and non-scholarly sources. However, a few students have difficulty distinguishing between sources. The statement 'I evaluate information for accuracy, relevance, and currency' has a mean score of 3.58, showing that students can assess information sources based on their accuracy, relevance and currency. The highest mean score of 3.95 for the statement 'I am cautious while using information from social media and websites' shows that participating students are cautious while using information obtained from social media and websites.

Table No. 5

Ethical Use of Information								
Sr. No	Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	I understand what plagiarism is	09	63	23	16	07	3.43	1.03
2	I know how to cite sources properly	12	73	13	17	03	3.63	0.96
3	I am aware of copyright and fair use policies	10	77	14	13	04	3.64	0.92
4	I acknowledge sources while preparing assignments and projects	15	86	10	06	01	3.92	0.74

5	I am familiar with citation styles such as APA/MLA/Chicago	08	66	30	10	04	3.54	0.91
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The data presented in the table indicate awareness regarding the ethical use of information among participating students. The mean score of 3.43 for the item 'I understand what plagiarism is' indicates that the majority of the students understand the concept of plagiarism. However, a considerable number of students disagree or are neutral. It means that there is a need to create awareness regarding plagiarism. The statement 'I know how to cite sources properly' has a mean score of 3.63, which indicates that students have knowledge of the concept of citation. However, some students need guidance in referencing techniques. The mean value of 3.64 for the item 'I am aware of copyright and fair use policies' indicates students have a satisfactory level of understanding regarding legal and ethical use of information. The standard deviation score of 0.92 shows consistency in responses. The statement 'I acknowledge sources while preparing assignments and projects' has the highest mean score of 3.92, which indicates the students acknowledge the sources while preparing their assignments and projects. The statement 'I am familiar with citation styles such as APA/MLA/Chicago' has a 3.54 mean score value, indicating that the students are familiar with different citation styles. However, major numbers of neutral responses indicate that some students are not confident in applying these citation styles.

Discussion: The results of the study show that the students' information literacy skills are generally good. They showed satisfactory skills in identifying information needs and good competency in searching the library databases and accessing scholarly information resources. Students' evaluation of information sources was also moderate to high. Their ability to evaluate source credibility and differentiate scholarly and non-scholarly information, however, needs improvement. Likewise, they demonstrated that they have a good sense of the ethical use of information, and more needs to be done on how to avoid plagiarism and what style to use for citations. Overall, the study reveals the importance of conducting regular library orientation, information literacy programmes, and practical workshops to upgrade the information literacy skills of the students.

Conclusion: The findings of the study revealed that the information literacy skills of undergraduate students were good, with a mean score ranging from 3.63 to 3.73 for the four dimensions. The undergraduate students were successful in identifying their information needs, finding information, evaluating information sources, and using information responsibly. The students showed confidence in using the library databases, in their ability to narrow down search results, in the authors' credentials, and in their ability to cite sources. But there are still missing areas in the areas of identifying scholarly sources, comprehension of plagiarism, use of OPAC, and the use of various citation styles. Thus, the study suggested conducting the information literacy training programme regularly and conducting a library orientation programme to inculcate more academic and research competency among the undergraduate students, and it is also suggested that training programmes on database searching, plagiarism, and citation be conducted in the library....

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