

**INFORMATION LITERACY SKILLS OF RESEARCH SCHOLARS OF
SRI G.V.G VISALAKSHI COLLEGE FOR WOMEN, (AUTONOMOUS),
UDUMALPET, TAMILNADU : AN EVALUATIVE STUDY**



ABSTRACT

Lifelong learning is viewed as the earnest need for Information Literacy skills in a Research scholar's research life cycle. This study aimed to ascertain how well-versed in information literacy (IL) the research scholars at Sri G.V.G. Visalakshi College for Women in Udumalpet, Tamil Nadu were. The Census approach was employed. To gather information, a closed-ended survey in Google Forms was distributed. 45 Research Scholars (both M.Phil and P.hd) from the Arts and Science Streams in both reacted well. Data entry and analysis were done using SPSS V.23 and Microsoft Excel. The results showed that research scholars have some information literacy knowledge in a few areas, but they still require training in various IL skills to become familiar with them.

Key Words : *Information literacy, Research Scholars, Information Literacy (IL) Skills, Higher Education(HE), Tamil Nadu.*

Introduction

Information literacy is not only creating awareness; it also makes users to acquainted with the physical availability of the information and helps them to understand the information, its characteristics, and its use. It is about introducing students to the forms of information available to them, and then helping them to determine what sort of information they need for any specific context, how to find it, how to evaluate it, and how to use it effectively and ethically (Munavalli, 2018). Information Literacy skills include the ability of an individual to recognize the need for information, identify and retrieve the information, evaluate and use the information and acknowledge the use of information.

Study Unit

Sri G.V.G Visalakshi College for Women is one of the oldest institutions in the country, founded in the rural districts of the then-combined Coimbatore district in 1952 and granted autonomy in 1995. The College has a nearly seven-decade educational legacy and autonomous status for 25 years, allowing academic flexibility to provide a holistic education, benchmarking quality standards, and excellence in women's education, surpassing many milestones, the most recent being the award of an A+ grade by NAAC in the fourth cycle of Accreditation in 2019. The college is one of the UGC Mentoring Institutions for NAAC accreditation

via the PARAMARSH Scheme during 2019-2020. The institution has been ISO 9001:2015 certified. In 2017, the MHRD named the institution one of the Top Ten Best Institutions in the country for imparting Digital Financial Literacy through the VIS program. The DBT Star College Scheme has been essential in improving the teaching-learning process. The Institutions Innovation Council (IIC with a 3.5-star rank), which is supported and funded by the MHRD-IIC, works hard to instill a culture of innovation among faculty and students and raise awareness of Intellectual Property Rights. Under the Swachhta Action Plan, 2020–21, the institution received "the One District One Green Champion Award" from MGNCRE, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education. With 150 students, the institution completed 12 outreach programs as a Network Institute of IIRS-ISRO.

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Statement of the Problem

In this age of current information viewpoint, students are regularly confounded on where to get required data for a specific task or examination. IL Skills has significantly reformed information management and organization of information positively. It is expected that women research scholars would be familiar with and comfortable with IL skills. For a research scholar, information literacy provides a complete academic prospect, solely for aiming for education/research accomplishments, IL skill being an indicator of scholarly greatness and particularly makes a more cultured, insightful, and assertive women scientists. This study has been carried out to explore the information literacy skills of research scholars of Sri G.V.G.Visalakshi College for Women, Udumalpet, Tamil Nadu. This study highlights the IL skill levels of research scholars and helps the institution to concentrate on the development of the IL competency of the scholars to get higher ranks/ grades in NIFR and Accreditations by improving the contribution of the scholars in their research activities.

Review of the Literature

Islam and Rahman (2014) in the study “Assessing Information Literacy Competency of Arts Faculty Students at the University of Dhaka” disclosed that the IL Competency is not good, since the existing syllabus does not support improvement in IL Skills. Issa, Amusan, Olarongbe, Igwe, and Oguntayo (2015) in “An Assessment of the information literacy competence of undergraduate students at the University of Ilorin, Kwara state, Nigeria” revealed that the knowledge of undergraduates is less in Information Literacy. Ramamurthy, Siridevi, and Ramu (2015) in the study “Information Literacy Search Skills of Students in Five Selected Engineering Colleges in Chittoor District, Andhra Pradesh: A Perspective” revealed that except few students majority of the students do not have good information Literacy skills. Ramasamy and Padma (2017) conducted a study on “Information Literacy Skills of Hostelling Full-Time Female Ph.D. Research Scholars of Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai (TN): A Study” and found that the majority of the respondents needed an introduction to Information Literacy as a paper in University Courses. Murugan, Saravanakumar & Thirumagal (2019),

in the research article “Awareness of Information Literacy among Students of Arts and Science Colleges in Tirunelveli – A Study” reported that, in essence, both undergraduate and postgraduate students have meager knowledge about information literacy. Safdar and Idrees (2021) in their paper “Assessing Undergraduate and Post Graduate Students’ Information Literacy Skills: Scenario and Requirements in Pakistan” revealed that both categories of students are equally not conversant in IL skills.

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Aim of the Study

This study focuses on the investigation and evaluates the information literacy skills of the research scholars of ‘Sri G.V.G.Visalakshi College for Women, Udumalpet, Tamilnadu State, India.

Objectives

The objectives of this research are to assess the information literacy skills of the research scholars to

- ❖ Know the Type and Level of information need
- ❖ Access the necessary information
- ❖ Evaluate the retrieved information and its sources
- ❖ Use the data effectively to achieve a specific purpose
- ❖ Ensure ethical and legal use of information

Research design: An evaluative research design for the current study is chosen by the researcher. The information literacy (IL) skills of the researchers are evaluated with the help of an established IL standard. This census study has collected data from a limited population.

Data Collection Tool: Questionnaires through Google forms (Closed-ended) were utilized to collect the information from the scholars. It was useful for the responders to fill in as well as for the researcher to accumulate data.

Population: All research scholars from six departments (Economics, English Commerce, Physics, Maths, and History) of the college form the sample of the present study. 48 scholars were pursuing their research in these 6 departments. Questionnaires were forwarded to all.

Response: Questionnaires for all 48 scholars of six departments were forwarded. They were intimated to

respond. 32 responders submitted their Google forms. 29 responses were selected for the final analysis after they were scrutinized for correctness/completeness/Redundancy/Ambiguity.

Design of Questionnaire : Cautiously designed Survey questions were used to collect socio-demographic details, information literacy skills, and need for Information Literacy Programme (ILP) data. They were designed into three sections with easy, clear, and simple words.

Scope and Limitation : The present study is restricted

- ❖ To women research scholars.
- ❖ To the women research scholars of an arts and science college.
- ❖ To the honest and right self-evaluation responses given by the respondents

Data Analysis and Interpretation

I Socio-demographic Information

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The respondents were 24 Ph.D. and 5 M.Phil scholars, all of them were women since the population is from a women’s college, from six departments Economics (5), English (12) Commerce (3), Physics(3), Maths (2), and History (4) of the college. The age group spanned from 21 to 25 (12), 26 to 30 (7),31 to 35(5),36 to 40 (3) & 41 and above (2) respectively. The nativity analysis shows that 19 are from rural and 10 are from urban areas.

Response Rate: Out of the total 48 scholars from six departments, 32 filled forms were received (66.66%). Out of which, 03 responses were rejected due to lack of Correctness/Completeness, or Redundancy/Ambiguity. Hence, 29 (60.41%) responses were acknowledged for analysis.

Level of computer expertise: Out of 29 responders, 13.79% (4) have good ‘computer expertise’ (23, 79.31%). of the respondents have excellent computer expertise while 6.89% (2) of them have poor computer expertise.

II. INFORMATION LITERACY SKILLS

Note. SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; NAND = Neither Agree Nor Disagree; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree.

Table 1
Knowing the Type and Level of information needed



S. No	Statement	SA	A	NAND	D	SD	Total
1	I can define and express the information needed when it arises	9	16	4	0	0	29
2	I can find the sources of information I need	13	14	2	0	0	29
3	I can think over the cost/benefit of the information needed from various sources	7	15	7	0	0	29
4	I can reconsider the original information needed to explain, change or refine the inquiry that should be answered.	12	13	4	0	0	29

The responders self-evaluated their information literacy skills in identifying the need for information. The results are given in Table 1. The majority “agreed” upon the skill possessed for knowing the type & level of needed Information.

Table 2
Accessing the necessary information

S. No	Statement	SA	A	NAND	D	SD	Total
1	I can choose the best technique and/ or database to meet my information needs as necessary	14	12	3	0	0	29
2	I can construct, execute and design search strategies to discover my necessary information from print or digital sources	13	12	3	1	0	29
3	I can extract information via different means	11	13	4	1	0	29
4	I can refine the search strategies if the need arises	13	12	4	0	0	29
5	I can retrieve and manage located information with suitable software/ hardware	11	13	5	0	0	29
6	I can record every relevant reference for the present and future information need	10	17	2	0	0	29

The responders self-evaluated their information literacy skills in accessing the necessary information. The results given in Table 2 show an equal majority in “Strongly

Agreed” and “agreed” upon the skills possessed for accessing the necessary information.

Table 3
Evaluating the retrieved information and its sources

S. No	Statement	SA	A	NA ND	D	SD	Total
1	I can sum up the key idea to be mined from the information gathered	13	15	0	1	0	29
2	I can inspect and look at information collected from different sources to assess quality, legitimacy, precision, authority and so on	13	13	3	0	0	29
3	I can combine main ideas to develop new ideas for my own research work	18	11	0	0	0	29
4	I can critically appraise and evaluate new information with earlier available information in determining the value added, conflicts, or other interesting qualities of the information	8	17	3	1	0	29
5	I can decide if the information I got is important or not?	16	12	1	0	0	29
6	I can recommend my understanding and knowledge of the information through conversation with Subject Matter Experts, peer researchers, academicians, and others	16	13	0	0	0	29
7	I can decide if the information needed is refined or if the preliminary question should be revised	14	14	1	0	0	29

The responders self-evaluated their information literacy skills in evaluating the retrieved information and its sources. The results given in Table 3 show an equal majority in “Strongly Agreed” and “agreed” upon the 2 skills and an equal majority in “Strongly Agreed” and “agreed” upon the skills possessed for two questions each in evaluating the retrieved information and its sources.

Table 4
Using the data effectively to achieve a specific purpose



S. No	Statement	SA	A	NA ND	D	SD	Total
1	I know how to convey the result or execution made from the extracted information convincingly	12	16	0	1	0	29
2	I know how to convey the result or execution made from the extracted information convincingly	14	14	0	1	0	29
3	I can adhere to laws, guidelines, institutional approaches, and decorum connected with the admittance and use of information resources	13	15	1	0	0	29

The responders self-evaluated their information literacy skills in Using the data effectively to achieve a specific purpose. The results given in Table 4 show a majority “Agree” with the skills possessed for Using the data effectively to achieve a specific purpose.

Table 5
Ethical and legal Use of information

S. No	Statement	SA	A	NA ND	D	S D	Total
1	I can comprehend the ethical, legal, and socio-economic issues of information and information technology	10	15	3	1	0	29
2	I can adhere to laws, guidelines, institutional approaches, and decorum connected with the admittance and use of information resources	13	13	3	0	0	29
3	I can cite sources using suitable referencing styles	14	12	3	0	0	29
4	I know what plagiarism is and its implications and how to avoid it.	14	11	4	0	0	29

The responders self-evaluated their information literacy skills in the Ethical and Legal use of information. The results given in Table 5 show that the majority of the respondents “Agree” with one skill (S.No1) possessed and

an equal majority “Strongly Agreed” and “agreed” upon two (SNo. 3 and 4) and a majority “Strongly agreed” upon one skill for Ethical and Legal Use of information.

III. Need for Information Literacy Programme (ILP)

Table 6

Do you think any Information Literacy Programme(ILP) is needed to improve your information literacy skills?

S.No	(Workshop/Training/Hands on practice/Seminars etc.)	Total
1	Yes	24
2	Maybe	5

Table 7

Do you think the Information Literacy course should be introduced in the curriculum itself?

S.No	As an elective/ major/ non-major paper in the regular UG/ PG course	Total
1	Strongly Agree	12
2	Agree	17

Tables 6 and 7 reveal that ILP should be conducted in the forms of Workshops /pieces of training/ Hands-on practice/Seminars etc., which is the major requirement of the respondents, and also a majority expected to have an Information Literacy course be introduced into the curriculum.

Major Findings

From Table.1 “Knowing the Type and Level of information needed’, it is inferred that the respondents are strong in defining and expressing the information needed when it arises. From Table .2 “Accessing the necessary information” scholars are strong in recording every relevant reference for the present and future information needs. From Table .3 “Evaluating the retrieved information and its sources” research scholars are strong in critically appraising and evaluating new information with earlier available information in determining the value-added conflicts, or other interesting qualities of the information. From Table 4 “Using the data effectively to achieve a specific purpose” we come to know that the scholars are capable of conveying the results or execution made from the extracted information

convincingly. From Table.5” Ethical and Legal Use of information” scholars can comprehend the ethical, legal, and socio-economic issues about information and information technology. Thus the scholars have acquired the basic Information literacy skills and expect training to partake in-depth knowledge in them.

Suggestions

Initially, seminars, workshops, and conferences on the extensive use of searching methods are recommended, followed by assignments/report preparation for a specified topic for experiment or research and presentation for continual assessment with weightage. Information literacy must eventually be included as a core or elective subject. The plan is to start with a report or presentation on a subject she is interested in before moving on to a sizable research project. Reviewing, comparing, and assessing them in a professional and ethical manner while applying the knowledge learned, will automatically address how to identify the necessary information, uncover and fill the subject's knowledge gaps, and use various ways for doing so. The pupils' IL Skills will steadily develop as a result.

Conclusion

strong information literacy skills will enhance the research performance of the scholars and make their life and career fruit-bearing, especially in the present age of information explosion where terabytes of information in various forms, formats, and types are being produced every hour.

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