

# Navigating the Digital Landscape: Infusing Information Literacy (IL) Across the Curriculum

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**Abstract:-** This study aims to understand IL and its origins better. The study thoroughly reviewed existing literature to explore the concept of information literacy, its significance, and potential ways to integrate it into the curriculum. Information literacy is the ability to obtain and use digital media in information-rich situations ethically. The concept of IL was first proposed by Guo Huang and Paul Zurkowski in 1974. Since then, organisations such as the IFLA and UNESCO have been working to develop skills related to information literacy. Whether in the classroom or in the business world, information literacy is a critical skill for success. Digital literacy encompasses the skills required to navigate today's complex digital landscape. Our study emphasises incorporating information literacy education into secondary and university curricula.

**Keywords:-** Digital media, Digital Information Literacy, Literacy Skills, Information, Curriculum.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In today's society, individuals need to acquire the skills necessary to obtain and utilise information effectively. This includes differentiating between credible and false information and creating new, relevant information to support the use of digital technology and the internet. Living in an information society, "it is necessary to have the ability to create, distribute, and manipulate information using new digital technologies", as highlighted by Rouse (2020). In order to effectively contribute to the community in this society, possessing information literacy skills is a must for individuals.

Information literacy is a crucial skill that enables individuals to effectively access, evaluate, and utilise information in digital media and information-rich environments. It encompasses the ability to navigate through various sources of information, distinguish between credible and unreliable sources, and apply critical thinking skills to analyse and interpret the information. In today's digital age, information literacy plays a vital role in personal and professional development, enabling individuals to make informed decisions and stay up-to-date with the latest trends and developments in their fields (Reddy et al., 2020). It involves understanding the characteristics of information, its underlying concepts, socioeconomic and technological infrastructure, and its influence. Furthermore, information

literacy is an ongoing activity that involves intentionally seeking out information, comprehending how information is produced, and applying it to generate new knowledge and participate ethically in learning communities (ACRL Board, 2015).

As Guo and Huang (2020) found, information literacy is now a critical skill that everyone needs in the twenty-first century, and educational institutions should strongly emphasise it. Since young people, mainly university students and researchers, are most frequently utilising technology to obtain information, promoting information literacy and evaluating senior students' abilities should be emphasised (Kumar et al., 2021). Without information literacy skills acquired through their education at high schools, colleges, and universities, researchers would be unable to contribute successfully to the growth of their communities (Anunoby & Udem, 2014).

Moreover, information literacy competency has been linked to an individual's digital literacy capacity, as Sorgo et al. (2017) suggest. By promoting information literacy, we can address and reverse the adverse effects of the digital divide and other related issues (Kgosiemang, 2016). Research on information literacy is well-established in wealthy countries. Many countries' educational systems today include information literacy instruction in their curricula (Baji et al., 2018; Banik & Kumar, 2019). The study of information literacy in developing countries such as India is still in its early stages. Even though information and communication technologies have significantly impacted society, there is a lack of research on information literacy. The current study aims to contribute to information literacy knowledge by proposing a novel framework and measuring scale. The proposed framework and measuring scale are designed to assess people's information literacy abilities in developing countries. This research will provide valuable insights and contribute to developing information literacy programs to empower individuals with the skills necessary to navigate the ever-growing world of information. There is currently no framework or scale for evaluating an individual's level of information literacy, let alone in India or South Asia. Information literacy skills have not been extensively evaluated, although information literacy instruction has not been generally adopted in South Asian higher education.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### ➤ Definitions

In today's world, technology is used in many different ways to connect people socially. However, many people lack the knowledge and ethics to use technology appropriately. This can lead to gaps in people's understanding of information and how to use it. Information literacy is a way to address this issue and help people navigate the digital world. In 1974, the renowned Paul Zurkowski introduced a novel concept that revolutionised the realm of technology. Since its inception, this concept has undergone several modifications to keep in tandem with the rapid technological advancements that have swept across the globe. Information literacy can be beneficial for students who rely on the internet for their studies, as it helps them find reliable and up-to-date information. However, in the 21st century, everyone should have some level of information literacy, as technology has changed how we seek information. Organisations like the IFLA, UNESCO, and the American Library Association have all defined information literacy as a set of skills people need to be successful in today's complex information environment.

Different writers define information literacy differently, but there are some standard abilities that people with information literacy possess. These include identifying their information needs, finding the information they need, assessing the information they find, and applying it to achieve their goals. They should also be able to analyse information and use appropriate methods when obtaining it, recognise credible sources of information, and use digital technology to discover and synthesise information while following legal and ethical guidelines and using proper citation styles.

### III. IMPORTANCE OF INFORMATION LITERACY

According to a recent literature review, information literacy is becoming increasingly vital in both the academic and commercial worlds. As Naveed (2021) highlighted, information literacy is crucial for students to excel in their academic tasks and for employees to navigate and utilise information beyond their search-related skills. This involves various strategies to manage information, identify sources, and assess accuracy. As such, information literacy has become one of the essential skills that every twenty-first-century employee must possess to succeed in the workplace. Therefore, graduates forming the future labour force must be information literate to thrive in their careers. Consequently, information literacy is rapidly gaining significance in educational settings.

Internet use can pose risks, particularly for those who lack computer literacy (Coklar et al., 2017). The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a significant shift towards online education, leaving students at a greater risk of being exposed to misinformation. Individuals who lack information literacy skills are particularly vulnerable to such falsehoods. Extensive research conducted by Aslan and Yilmaz (2021),

Aharony and Gazit (2020), Reddy et al. (2020), and Coklar et al. (2020) has highlighted the importance of possessing digital native skills that encompass information literacy to combat this issue. Poor information literacy can also impact students' academic performance and self-efficacy (Aharony & Gazit, 2020; Kumar et al., 2023). On the other hand, information literacy can boost a student's confidence in their ability to learn and support lifelong learning (Zoubi, 2021; Preeti & Kumar, 2023). In college, students who possess subject knowledge tend to perform better and exhibit higher self-efficacy, as Konovalenko and Nadolska (2020) noted. In today's information age, it has become imperative to include comprehensive information literacy skills in the educational curricula of schools and universities. Educators should emphasise the ability to access, evaluate, analyse, and effectively use information from various sources. It is essential to equip students with the knowledge and skills required to navigate the vast ocean of information available to them, enabling them to make informed decisions and judgments based on credible sources. Incorporating information literacy into the curriculum will ensure that students are well-equipped to handle the challenges of the modern world, both academically and professionally.

In today's digital age, the sheer volume of information available challenges acquiring knowledge. With so many electronic resources at our fingertips, individuals must possess information literacy skills to analyse and validate the information they consume. The literature underscores the importance of equipping students with the knowledge and abilities essential for success in the twenty-first century, which is the cornerstone of an effective educational system. Pinto et al. (2020) emphasise the significance of educators' information literacy skills and recommend incorporating it into teacher education. As teachers play a crucial role in imparting information literacy to students, they must possess the necessary skills to develop effective strategies for enhancing students' information literacy (Ramos, 2019).

### IV. INFORMATION LITERACY AND EDUCATION

The educational system plays a critical role in the progress of each country. Educational institutions significantly contribute to delivering and maintaining high-quality instruction, promoting lifelong learning. According to Banik and Kumar (2019), lifelong learning involves people's desire to improve their knowledge, skills, and capabilities. Modern students and recent graduates who commit to ongoing education demonstrate traits that foster personal and career growth (Kumar et al., 2020). Individuals dedicated to lifelong learning should be able to integrate insights from diverse sources, adeptly produce and disseminate information, demonstrate information literacy, and maintain a favourable attitude toward acquiring knowledge (Banik & Kumar, 2019). Lifelong learning requires information literacy, and collaborative efforts have been shown to foster individuals' self-esteem and self-assurance (Demirel & Akkoyunlu, 2017). According to the authors, an information-literate individual acknowledges their need for knowledge, possesses the skills to acquire it,

applies it effectively, and is equipped for continuous learning throughout their life.

In the twenty-first century, information literacy has become increasingly important. Individuals in this era must possess information literacy skills and engage in ongoing learning throughout their lives (Banik & Kumar, 2019). Educational institutions ranging from preschool to university play a crucial role in nurturing information literacy among students. Research has shown that information literacy can improve children's development, including their computer skills, critical thinking abilities, and self-efficacy (Aharony & Gazit, 2020; Valenzuela et al., 2019; Baji et al., 2018). This emphasis on students is driven by the recognition that they represent the future workforce and will need to navigate a world abundant in information once they graduate. Precision and high-quality information handling are essential skills in today's professional landscape, marked by its technical nature and the constant influx of information.

Academic experts have highlighted that the assumption that students entering educational institutions inherently possess the ability to efficiently access and effectively utilise information is not entirely accurate (Reddy et al., 2020b). It is important to note that being proficient in utilising advanced digital technology does not necessarily equate to possessing critical information literacy skills. Recent literature indicates that digital literacy in the twenty-first century is influenced by various literacies, including information, communication, technology, computers, and visuals (Morilla et al., 2021). In today's digital age, having the skills to navigate the digital landscape has become increasingly essential. Individuals who possess digital skills have the ability to collect, analyse, and effectively use data, as well as create and share content with the help of digital tools (Reddy et al., 2020). Digital literacy encompasses a wide range of skills and knowledge, including information, media, visual, and communication skills and proficiency in using information and communication technologies (ICT) (Cetin, 2021). It involves the ability to use technology to access, evaluate, and communicate information effectively and responsibly. Possessing digital literacy is crucial for success in many fields, including education, business, and healthcare, among others. There is a wealth of evidence to suggest that information literacy is a crucial factor in enhancing students' media literacy, digital literacy, mobile learning skills, and academic capabilities. Several studies conducted by experts in the field, such as Morilla et al. (2021), Manu et al. (2020), Kusumastuti & Nuryani (2020), Pinto et al. (2018), and Munn and Small (2017), have highlighted the importance of information literacy in the digital age. It should be noted that information literacy is closely linked to digital literacy, as individuals often use digital literacy skills when they are applying information literacy skills. Therefore, it is essential to recognise the critical role of information literacy in enhancing digital literacy and other essential skills vital for success in today's world.

In modern education, being able to search for, use, create, and share information is crucial for academic success, as highlighted by Banik and Kumar (2019). Information literacy skills not only boost students' confidence but also enhance their academic motivation, as noted by Ross et al. (2016). Furthermore, Munn and Small (2017) argue that these skills promote self-directed and independent learning. Parsazadeha et al. (2018) stress the critical importance of information literacy training in today's technologically advanced era. Integrating information literacy practices into the educational curriculum has proven to be one of the most effective strategies for advancing information literacy education.

## V. CURRENT RESEARCH IN INFORMATION LITERACY

The realm of information literacy research is still in its infancy. However, it has already been thoroughly explored across fields such as artificial intelligence, professional settings, education, scientific endeavours, governance, digital literacy, and bridging the digital divide. Naveed's research emphasises the vital role of information literacy in the workplace, where employees are responsible for evaluating and utilising extensive amounts of information to make decisions. Additionally, Middleton (2021) discovered that information literacy positively impacts creative work behaviour, as employees with solid information literacy skills are more likely to develop innovative products, services, and organisational structures. It is noteworthy that rural populations currently demonstrate a notable proficiency in information literacy.

Much academic research has focused on evaluating students' information literacy and its significant influence on lifelong learning (White, 2021; Drossel et al., 2020; Head et al., 2020). Pursuing lifelong learning is synonymous with developing information literacy skills in the twenty-first century. Acquiring information literacy not only enhances students' capacity to engage in meaningful study, discussions, and the development of critical thinking skills but also empowers them to embark on a journey of independent learning. White (2021) highlights that individuals with robust information literacy skills are better prepared to confront and address future challenges.

The importance of being information literate extends beyond traditional education and is relevant in various aspects of modern life. It equips individuals with the necessary tools to navigate an increasingly complex and information-rich world. Information literacy is a foundation for personal growth, adaptability, and the ability to make informed decisions.

Numerous frameworks and models have been developed and rigorously tested to foster information literacy in the field of education. These frameworks provide a structured approach to building information literacy skills, enabling educators to guide students in pursuing knowledge acquisition and critical thinking. The ongoing refinement and implementation of these frameworks highlight the

evolving nature of information literacy as a crucial skill for academic success and lifelong learning.

In a fast-paced society where information constantly expands, information literacy is becoming increasingly essential in promoting lifelong learning. According to White's (2021) insights, individuals with information literacy skills are well-equipped to tackle the multifaceted challenges of the twenty-first century. This transformative skill enhances critical thinking capabilities and fosters a desire for independent learning, empowering students to become lifelong learners.

Information literacy plays a crucial role in today's rapidly changing world, where knowledge is constantly evolving. It acts as a compass, guiding individuals through the vast sea of information that continues to surge. A groundbreaking approach has been introduced to measure individuals' information literacy abilities, drawing inspiration from recent advances in the field. This approach involves creating a comprehensive information literacy framework, forming the foundation for a self-assessment questionnaire to evaluate Fiji students' information literacy skills. By tailoring the questionnaire to the unique needs and contexts of Fijian students, the study aims to provide a more accurate and meaningful measurement of their information literacy abilities. Ultimately, the study seeks to empower these students with the necessary tools to succeed in a world where adaptability, critical thinking, and independent learning are essential.

## VI. CONCLUSION

In the modern world, with a wealth of information at our fingertips, students of all levels are becoming more aware of technological advancements. They are utilising them to meet their academic and personal needs. However, it is essential to acknowledge that not all students possess the same information literacy skills. Researchers argue that information literacy is a crucial component of digital literacy, and one's digital literacy skills inherently depend on their information literacy abilities. A recent study has introduced a novel framework and assessment scale for evaluating individuals' information literacy. According to the authors of this study, there is a close relationship between an individual's information literacy skills and digital literacy abilities. As one's information literacy skills improve, so does their overall competence in navigating the digital landscape. This research provides a valuable foundation in India, a country still in the early stages of developing its information literacy initiatives. The framework and scale presented in the study could serve as valuable tools to measure and enhance the information literacy of individuals, ultimately empowering them to make more informed and effective use of technology in various aspects of their lives. As India embraces the digital age, fostering information literacy through innovative tools and strategies for personal and societal advancement is increasingly essential.

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