



EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION AND EXPERIENCE AS CORRELATES TO DIGITAL LITERACY AND INFORMATION ACCESS AMONG LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE EDUCATORS IN UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH-SOUTH NIGERIA

¹Grace Anyaobi, & ²Anthonia, U. Echedom

¹Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi-Uku, Nigeria. Email: grace.anyaobi@yahoo.com

²Department of Library and Information Science, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria Email: au.echedom@unizik.edu.ng

PHONE NO:08034908733

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Abstract:

Purpose: This study was carried out to investigate the relationship between educational qualification and experience as correlates of digital and information access among library and information science educators in universities in south south Nigeria.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The correlational research design was adopted for this study. Four objectives and four research questions and four hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. 181 LIS educators were used to gather data for the study. The questionnaire and cognitive test were the main instruments for data collection. Data was analysed using Pearson product-moment correlation and t-test correlation test on SPSS.

Findings: The study found a weak positive link between educational attainment and information access ($r = .163, p < .05$), but not with digital literacy. Professional experience was slightly associated with digital literacy ($r = .146, p = .050$) but not with information access. Advanced education and longer service years may have certain benefits, but they do not predict digital literacy or equal information access in this professional environment.

Implication: The study emphasises the necessity of ongoing professional development, institutional support, and specialised training for LIS instructors to reduce digital skill gaps.

Originality/Value: Policy and institutional solutions that promote digital inclusion and literacy regardless of background or experience are recommended. The study adds to the discussion on digital equity in universities and highlights the nuanced role of socio-demographic factors in defining digital competence amongst information professionals.

Keywords: Digital Literacy, Information Access, Educational Attainment, Professional Experience, Library Educators, South-South Nigeria.

Paper type: Empirical research

Introduction

The proliferation of digital devices, internet connectivity, and digital content has transformed the generation, distribution, and consumption of information. In this context, modern libraries offer digital repositories, e-books, online databases, and various digital resources to satisfy users' informational

needs (Umar, Musa and Aliyu, 2014). Fagbola, Uzoigwe, and Ajegbomogun (2011) asserted that to maintain relevance among the abundance of knowledge on the internet, libraries must adapt to the digital era. Therefore, it is essential for educators in library and information science, who influence the information landscape, to possess digital literacy and adequate access to resources to fulfil their duties

efficiently.

Nonetheless, specific socio-demographic factors may influence the digital literacy competencies and information accessibility of library and information science educators. Social demographic variables are measurable attributes or characteristics of a population throughout a defined timeframe. Socio-demographic variables combine social and demographic elements to define people or groups.

Level of education is another significant socio-demographic variable that can directly impact digital literacy skills and access to information, including library educators. Level of education is the amount of formal schooling someone has completed, ranging from basic literacy to advanced degrees. Those with higher levels of education tend to have better digital literacy and easier access to information resources (Kolawole, Ladipo and Adebayo, 2015). In some cases, a person's level of education is a predictor of the jobs they hold and their income; in many communities, a higher level of education is associated with more excellent employment experiences and skills (Longe, 2021). Invariably, it can be implied that a higher level of education could improve one's digital literacy skills. Gilchrist (2018) and Ndou (2023) demonstrate the positive relationship between educational attainment and digital literacy. Those with a higher level of education typically demonstrate more sophisticated digital literacy abilities. Frequently, they have greater confidence with digital devices, a more profound comprehension of digital platforms, and enhanced technical skills. Despite this correlation, the digital divide persists, especially regarding computer competence (Lee, Choi, Kim, Neese, & Luo, 2020). Individuals with lower levels of education frequently trail behind those with higher levels of digital skills. This divide can exacerbate socioeconomic disparities, limiting educational and economic

opportunities for those with lower educational backgrounds.

Moreover, the influence of education extends beyond digital literacy to information access. Higher education is frequently associated with enhanced digital and analogue information access. People with advanced degrees or formal education typically have greater access to digital libraries, online databases, and academic journals for research (Falloon, 2020). Education empowers individuals to evaluate and select pertinent information from the extensive digital landscape. Nevertheless, studies that examine how education correlates with library education, digital literacy, and information access are seriously lacking.

Nonetheless, it is essential to note that demographic factors influence the relationship between educational attainment and digital literacy. In India's rural areas, demographic variables such as age, gender, marital status, level of education, social groups, religion, occupation, family size, and landholding size have a significant relationship with digital financial literacy (Azeez et al., 2022). Higher age and lower education are associated with the highest risk of digital illiteracy in the Czech Republic, particularly regarding biometrics and ICT safety knowledge (Doseděl, Kafková, & Vidovičová, 2022). There are pieces of evidence that suggest that there is a negative correlation between education level and digital literacy (Ndou, 2023). However, the socio-demographic characteristics that affect digital literacy and information access among library instructors in Nigeria are also understudied.

Professional years of experience is another example. Professional job experience is the number of years that a library educator has worked in an organisation or institution. Accumulated years of experience contributed to work acquaintance and

expertise which is likely to enable library and information science educators to effectively discharge their duties to attain effective teaching experience. Walson and Okwo (2017) noted that years of work experience are associated with digital literacy skills and sometimes information access. However, studies that explored the relationship between digital literacy and information access targeted interventions and policies that address library educators' different origins and requirements in South-south Nigeria need to understand how these socio-demographic characteristics affect digital literacy and information access are rare.

Meanwhile, digital literacy includes the abilities and competencies needed to utilize digital devices and access, evaluate, and produce digital information (Smirnova, 2015; Maphosa and Bhebhe, 2019). It involves using digital technologies for communication and knowledge production, navigating the internet, and critically assessing online content (Reddy, Sharma and Chaudhary, 2020). Previous research like those of Alkali, and Amichai-Hamburger (.2014) on digital literacy skills shows a multifaceted concept that extends beyond technical proficiency. The authors argue that digital literacy involves many sophisticated skills beyond software and gadget use, including cognitive, motor, and sociocultural abilities. Scholars like Wuyckens, Landry, and Fastrez (2022) define digital literacy as core computer skills, information literacy, media literacy, and critical thinking. This complexity emphasizes the need for a holistic approach to digital literacy assessment and development.

Digital literacy also requires lifelong study and professional growth (Smirnova, 2015). Library instructors must upgrade their digital abilities to stay relevant in a fast-changing technology context. Professional development and training have improved instructor digital literacy. Digital literacy is

needed to use these tools and resources effectively. Digital literacy comprises a range of abilities and competencies needed to manage the digital world. It involves critically assessing online material, using digital technology for communication and cooperation, and using digital resources for study and learning (Wuyckens, Landry and Fastrez, 2022). Digital literacy equips people with the necessary skills to use the digital age's immense information and knowledge.

Information access, on the other hand, is the capacity to receive relevant and accurate information when needed (Jaeger, 2017). The world's information is kept and shared electronically, digital literacy and information access are closely related. Library instructors need digital literacy skills to use digital repositories, databases, e-books, online journals, and other resources. Research has stressed educators' and students' need for digital literacy and information access. For example, Rafi, JianMing, and Ahmad (2019) argued that digital literacy is essential for library educators to teach students and users how to use digital resources and tools for research and study. Solid Digital literacy helps teachers utilize technology successfully (Smirnova, 2015; Rafi, JianMing, and Ahmad, 2019). Library educators' digital literacy is crucial to their abilities to use digital learning materials, study online, and cooperate online.

Despite the importance of digital literacy and information access, there is little empirical research on library instructors in South-South Nigeria. Such information will allow library instructor to effectively manage digital resources for effective teaching. These few studies discuss the importance of digital literacy and information access in different contexts. For instance, Kaeophanuek, Jaitip, and Nilsook (2018) focused on digital literacy skills among library and information science students. Machin-Mastromatteo's (2021) paper highlights the origins of

information literacy and its importance in problem-solving and valuing information. Integrating information literacy principles into education and the potential of open-access sources will provide affordable information. Singh and Grizzle (2021) emphasize the need for media and information literacy skills in managing access to quality information. These show the importance of digital literacy and information access in various domains and advocate for enhancing these skills and opportunities.

Studies also shed light on challenges and disparities in digital literacy (Ei, 2021). Existing research covers digital literacy skills in detail. It acknowledges these abilities' complexity, relevance in education, socio-demographic inequities, the need for solid evaluation techniques, and continual learning and professional development in the digital era. These differences emphasize the need for digital equality to enable equal access to digital resources and opportunities. However, digital literacy and information access research in educational contexts frequently overlooks library instructors' specific difficulties and possibilities in digital literacy and information access. Therefore, it is against this background that this study seeks to examine socio-demographic variables as correlates of digital literacy and information access among library and information science educators in universities in South-south Nigeria.

Statement of the problem

Libraries and information science educators must traverse the digital world since ICTs have transformed education. Helping students and library users access, assess, and use digital materials is essential to equitable education and information distribution. However, little is known about library educators' digital literacy and information access abilities and how socio-demographic factors affect them. Digital literacy and information access have been

studied in broader educational contexts, but library and information science educators in this region face unique challenges and opportunities. Little is known about how educational attainment and work experience affect library educators' digital literacy and information access. This study gap causes many serious concerns, including a lack of focused help. Without understanding library and information science educators' digital literacy, educational institutions and policymakers may struggle to provide targeted support and training (McFarlane, 2019). It can hinder library teachers' digital guidance for students and patrons.

Objectives

1. Determine the relationship between educational attainment and digital literacy among library and information science educators in universities in South-South Nigeria.
2. Determine the relationship between educational attainment and information access among library and information science educators in universities in South-South Nigeria
3. Determine the relationship between years of professional experience and digital literacy among library and information science educators in universities in South-South Nigeria.
4. Determine the relationship between years of professional experience and information access among library and information science educators in universities in South-South Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between educational attainment and digital literacy among library and information science educators in universities in South-South Nigeria?
2. What is the relationship between educational attainment and information access among library and information science educators in universities in South-South Nigeria?

3. What is the relationship between years of professional experience and digital literacy among library and information science educators in universities in South-South Nigeria?
4. What is the relationship between years of professional experience and information access among library and information science educators in universities in South-South Nigeria?

Hypothesis

Ho1. There is no significant relationship between educational attainment and digital literacy among library and information science educators in universities in South-South Nigeria.

Ho2 There is no significant relationship between educational attainment and information access among library and information science educators in universities in South-South Nigeria.

Ho3 There is no significant relationship between years of professional experience and digital literacy among library and information science educators in universities in South-South Nigeria.

Ho4 There is no significant relationship between years of professional experience and information access among library and information science educators in universities in South-South Nigeria.

Literature Review

Relationship between educational attainment and information access among library and information science educators

The relationship between educational attainment and information access is a critical area of study in information science and technology. Educational attainment significantly influences how individuals access, interpret, and utilize information. Higher levels of education typically correlate with greater proficiency in information-seeking behaviors, higher digital literacy, and more

frequent use of diverse information sources (van Deursen and van Dijk, 2014).

Individuals with higher educational attainment are generally more adept at navigating complex information environments. They possess better-developed research skills, critical thinking abilities, and a greater capacity to evaluate the credibility of various information sources (Whitworth, 2014). These skills enable them to efficiently locate and use information across multiple platforms, including digital databases, academic journals, and online resources. The advantages conferred by higher education often result in more effective and productive information-seeking behavior, which can enhance both personal and professional outcomes (Hargittai, 2010).

Conversely, individuals with lower levels of educational attainment may face significant barriers to accessing information. These barriers can stem from limited digital literacy, reduced access to technology, and a lack of familiarity with effective research strategies (Selwyn, 2006). For these individuals, the digital divide—the gap between those who have easy access to digital technologies and those who do not—can be particularly pronounced. This divide often exacerbates existing inequalities, as individuals with lower educational attainment may not only lack access to information but also the skills required to utilize it effectively (van Dijk, 2005).

Socio-economic factors also play a pivotal role in the relationship between educational attainment and information access. Those with higher education levels typically enjoy better economic opportunities, which in turn provide greater access to technological resources such as computers, smartphones, and high-speed internet (James et al., 2019). This access is crucial for engaging with the vast array of information available in the digital age. In contrast, those with lower

educational levels may have limited financial resources, restricting their ability to acquire and use modern information technologies (Livingstone and Helsper, 2007).

The digital literacy gap is another significant aspect of this relationship. Digital literacy encompasses a range of skills necessary for effective information access, including the ability to use digital tools, understand digital content, and engage in safe online practices (Eshet-Alkalai, 2004). Higher educational attainment is strongly associated with higher levels of digital literacy. Educated individuals are more likely to be proficient in using digital platforms, performing online research, and engaging with social media in a meaningful way. This proficiency is often the result of both formal education and continuous learning practices that are more common among individuals with higher educational backgrounds (van Deursen, Helsper, and Eynon, 2014).

Educational institutions play a critical role in shaping information access capabilities. Schools, colleges, and universities provide the foundational skills and knowledge necessary for effective information seeking and use. They offer access to libraries, digital resources, and information technology training, which are essential for developing digital literacy (Aabo, 2005). Higher education, in particular, encourages the development of specialized knowledge and advanced research skills, further enhancing individuals' ability to access and utilize information effectively (Bawden and Robinson, 2009).

To mitigate the disparities in information access linked to educational attainment, various strategies can be implemented. Enhancing digital literacy programs for individuals with lower educational levels is crucial. These programs can provide the necessary skills

and confidence to engage with digital technologies and information sources (Selwyn, 2004). Community-based initiatives, such as public libraries and community centers, can also play a significant role in providing access to technology and information resources for those with limited educational backgrounds. These institutions can offer training and support, helping bridge the gap between different educational attainment levels (Lloyd, 2010).

Furthermore, policy interventions aimed at reducing the digital divide are essential. Ensuring affordable access to high-speed internet and digital devices can help level the playing field. Educational policies that emphasize the integration of digital literacy into the curriculum at all levels of education can also contribute to reducing disparities in information access (Bawden, 2001).

Educational attainment and digital literacy among Library and information science educators

Scholarly research has examined the link between educational attainment and digital literacy among library instructors, uncovering complex processes that affect information access in learning environments. Meyers, Erickson, and Small's (2013) research highlight how important formal and informal education is in building educators' digital literacy. Although the study focuses on informal education for digital literacy, the authors opined that using technology in teaching practices positively correlates with greater educational achievement. It could be implied that librarians with postgraduate degrees could be more proficient in digital skills, which might lead to better facilitation of students' access to information.

However, digital literacy and educational attainment do not have a linear connection (Reder, 2015). Reder's study casts doubt that increased education

equates to greater competency with technology. However, studies show that incorporating technology into curricula and providing continuous professional development are important ways to improve teachers' digital literacy (Meyers et al., 2013). This shows that while educational achievement has a role, library instructors' digital literacy levels are mostly shaped by the larger educational environment and continuous support systems.

Furthermore, according to research by Yustika and Iswati (2020), the influence of educational achievement on digital literacy depends on the field of study. Regarding digital literacy, library and information science educators with degrees in information science or similar subjects may have a stronger foundation than those with degrees in traditional library science. This emphasises how crucial it is to consider the multidisciplinary character of digital literacy when implementing library education.

Years of professional experience, digital literacy among library and information science educators

The impact of years of professional experience on digital literacy and information access in library instruction shows how expertise may affect instructors' technical ability. According to research by Ertmer et al. (2012), teachers may eventually better comprehend technology integration techniques through hands-on training. The study emphasises the value of situational and contextual knowledge acquired during years of teaching, which helps teachers use digital technologies for information access more effectively.

However, Uerz et al. (2018) argued that experienced educators have high pedagogical expertise but may need to be more proficient with technology. This casts doubt that more time spent in an educational setting inevitably results in

improved digital literacy. The results highlight the necessity of focused professional development initiatives to guarantee that teachers with different degrees of experience have modern digital competencies. Research by Niess (2005) indicates that when educators participate in reflective practises throughout their professional lives, the transformational potential of technology in education is maximised. Years of expertise add to a continual learning cycle that aligns with the dynamic character of digital literacy when combined with reflective teaching practises. In order to fully use the advantages of accumulated professional experience, educational environments must cultivate a culture of reflection and adaptation.

Within the context of the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), examining the link between years of professional experience and digital literacy illuminates the complex elements impacting educators' adoption and integration of technology for information access. The UTAUT theory asserts that individual experiences and perceptions influence how technology is accepted and used (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Based on their previous exposure to technological advancements, educators with diverse degrees of expertise may display different levels of acceptance and usage of digital technologies, according to research conducted in the context of library instruction.

Studies like Hakkarainen (2013) show that long technological exposure does not ensure adoption or utilisation. This calls into question the notion that high digital literacy is a natural consequence of years of work experience. According to UTAUT, the intention to utilise technology is influenced by performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and enabling factors. Depending on how they see the advantages and usability of digital

technologies, seasoned educators may be more or less open to implementing them for information access. This is because they may have established deeply ingrained attitudes and practices.

Furthermore, the association between years of professional experience and digital literacy is significantly shaped by the moderating variables in UTAUT, such as age and experience. For example, research by Magsamen-Conrad and Dillon (2020) suggests that experience may have varying effects on adopting technology among various age groups. While more seasoned educators would need focused interventions to overcome reluctance or inertia, younger educators could be more receptive to digital technologies and see them as essential to their teaching practices.

Methods

The study adopted a correlational research design. This design was chosen for its ability to reveal naturally occurring relationships without manipulating variables. The study was conducted in the South-South region, which hosts several universities with active library schools. The population consisted of 181 LIS educators across federal, state, and private universities in the region. No sampling technique was used; instead, a census approach was adopted due to the manageable population size. Data were collected using a structured instrument made up of a questionnaire and a cognitive test. The instrument comprised 42 items

grouped into three clusters: four items on socio-demographic variables, 30 multiple-choice questions assessing digital literacy, and eight items on information access, rated on a four-point Likert scale. Validation of the instrument was done by six experts from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Their feedback guided revisions that enhanced clarity and alignment with the study's objectives. Reliability was determined through a pilot test using 20 LIS educators from Southeast Nigeria. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were 0.931 for digital literacy and 0.826 for information access, indicating high internal consistency. Data collection was conducted through direct, face-to-face administration with assistance from research staff in each school. Participants had one month to complete the instrument, and ethical standards were observed. Data were analysed using SPSS version 25. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was used to address some research questions and test hypotheses. A 0.05 significance level guided statistical decisions, and correlation strength was interpreted using Mitchell and Jolley's classification system.

Results

Analysis of Research Question 1 and Hypothesis 1

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between educational attainment and digital literacy among library and information science educators in universities in South-South Nigeria?

Table 1: Pearson's Correlation r on the relationship between Educational Attainment and Digital Literacy among Library and Information Science Educators

Variable	N	R	Remark
Educational Attainment & Digital Literacy	181	.022	Very low positive relationship

Results in Table 1 show that educational attainment has a very weak positive relationship with digital literacy, $r = .022$. This suggests that, on average, higher educational attainment is associated with slightly higher digital literacy levels.

However, the relationship is so weak, indicating that educational attainment has little to no meaningful influence on digital literacy levels among library and information science educators in South-South Nigeria.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between educational attainment and digital literacy among

library and information science educators in universities in South-South Nigeria.

Table 2: T-test Correlation on the Relationship between Educational Attainment and Digital Literacy

N	Df	Cal. T	Correlation (r)	P-value	Remark
181	180	0.294	0.022	0.768	Not Significant

At a significance level of 0.05, with 180 degrees of freedom, the calculated t-value is 0.294 with a correlation of 0.022. The p-value (0.768) is greater than 0.05, leading to the retention of the null hypothesis. This showed that no significant relationship exist between educational attainment and digital literacy among library and information science educators in universities in South-South Nigeria.

Analysis of Research Question 2 and Hypothesis 2

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between educational attainment and information access among library and information science educators in universities in South-South Nigeria?

Table 3: Pearson's Correlation r on the relationship between Educational Attainment and Information Access among Library and Information Science Educators

Variable	N	R	Remark
Educational Attainment & Information Access	181	.163*	Low positive relationship

Results in Table 4.11 show that educational attainment has a low positive relationship with information access, $r = .163$. This suggests that, on average, educators with higher educational attainment tend to have slightly better access to information.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between educational attainment and information access among library and information science educators in universities in South-South Nigeria.

Table 4: T-test Correlation on the Relationship between Educational Attainment and Information Access

N	Df	Cal. T	Correlation (r)	P-value	Remark
181	180	2.210	0.163	0.028	Significant

At a significance level of 0.05, with 180 degrees of freedom, the calculated t-value is 2.210 with a correlation of 0.163. The p-value (0.028) is less than 0.05, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This showed that there is a significant relationship exist between educational attainment and information access among library and information science educators in universities in South-South Nigeria.

Analysis of Research Question 3 and Hypothesis 3

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between years of professional experience and digital literacy among library and information science educators in universities in South-South Nigeria?

Table 5: Pearson's Correlation r on the relationship between Years of Professional

Experience and Digital Literacy among Library and Information Science Educators

Variable	N	R	Remark
Years of Professional Experience & Digital Literacy	181	.146	Low positive relationship

Results in Table 5 show that years of professional experience have a low positive relationship with digital literacy, $r = .146$. This finding suggests that educators with more years of professional experience tend to have slightly higher digital literacy levels, but the relationship

remains weak.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between years of professional experience and digital literacy among library and information science educators in universities in South-South Nigeria.

Table 6: T-test Correlation on the Relationship between Years of Professional Experience and Digital Literacy

N	Df	Cal. T	Correlation (r)	P-value	Remark
181	180	1.975	0.146	0.050	Not Significant

At a significance level of 0.05, with 180 degrees of freedom, the calculated t-value is 1.975 with a correlation of 0.146. The p-value (0.050) is exactly at the threshold of significance, meaning that the relationship between years of professional experience and digital literacy is marginally significant. This showed there is a significant relationship that exist between years of professional experience among

library and information science educators in universities in South-South Nigeria.

Analysis of Research Question 4 and Hypothesis 4

Research Question 4: What is the relationship between years of professional experience and information access among library and information science educators in universities in South-South Nigeria?

Table 7: Pearson’s Correlation r on the relationship between Years of Professional Experience and Information Access among Library and Information Science Educators

Variable	N	R	Remark
Years of Professional Experience & Information Access	181	.007	Negligible positive relationship

Results in Table 7 show that years of professional experience have a negligible positive relationship with information access, $r = .007$. This suggests that, on average, as years of professional experience increase, information access tends to increase only minimally. This indicates that years of professional experience have little to no meaningful

association with information access among library and information science educators in South-South Nigeria.

Hypothesis 4: There is no significant relationship between years of professional experience and information access among library and information science educators in universities in South-South Nigeria.

Table 8: T-test Correlation on the Relationship Between Years of Professional Experience and Information Access

N	Df	Cal. T	Correlation (r)	P-value	Remark
181	180	0.094	0.007	0.928	Not Significant

At a significance level of 0.05, with 180 degrees of freedom, the calculated t-value is 0.094 with a correlation of 0.007. The p-value (0.928) is much greater than 0.05, meaning that there is no significant relationship between years of professional experience and information access among library and information science educators in universities in South-South Nigeria.

Discussion

Relationship between Educational Attainment and Digital Literacy

The findings suggest that educational attainment has a low positive but not significant relationship with digital literacy among library and information science educators in South-South Nigeria. This implies that as educators attain higher levels of education, there is a slight increase in digital literacy, but the relationship is too weak to be considered meaningful. In other words, holding an advanced degree does not necessarily translate to significantly higher digital literacy skills in this group.

This finding aligns with previous research suggesting that while formal education provides a foundation for digital engagement, it does not automatically lead to higher digital proficiency. Kontovourki et al. (2017) argue that digital literacy is more strongly influenced by frequent technology use and hands-on experience rather than formal educational qualifications. Similarly, Van Deursen, Van Dijk and Peters (2011) emphasised that digital skills are acquired through practice and exposure rather than solely through academic achievements. These perspectives highlight that while education may contribute to basic digital competence, it is not the sole determinant of advanced digital literacy.

On the other hand, some studies

suggest that higher education levels do enhance digital literacy, particularly in fields that emphasise research and technology use. For instance, Marta and Michelle (2023) found that individuals with higher academic qualifications tend to have better critical and evaluative digital skills, enabling them to navigate and assess digital information more effectively. Similarly, Yamashita et al. (2024) argues that individuals with advanced education may have greater access to learning resources and opportunities to develop digital competencies. However, the absence of a significant relationship in this study suggests that within this professional group, digital literacy development is not necessarily tied to formal educational qualifications.

The weak association observed may be due to variations in technology exposure across different educational levels. Educators with lower academic qualifications may still develop strong digital literacy skills through self-learning, workplace training, or professional experience. Conversely, those with higher degrees may not necessarily engage deeply with digital tools if their academic journey did not require frequent technology use. Additionally, digital literacy is a continuously evolving skill set that requires ongoing learning, which may not always be captured through formal education alone.

Relationship between Educational Attainment and Information Access

The findings reveal that educational attainment has a low positive but significant relationship with information access among library and information science educators in South-South Nigeria. This suggests that as educators attain higher levels of education,

their ability to access information improves slightly, and this relationship, although weak, is statistically meaningful. In practical terms, educators with advanced degrees had relatively greater access to digital resources, likely due to increased research needs and institutional privileges.

This finding aligns with studies that suggest a positive link between education and information access. For instance, Ünver(2014) argues that higher education enhances individuals' ability to seek, evaluate, and utilise information effectively, particularly in academic and professional settings. Similarly, Feinberg et al. (2016) posits that individuals with advanced educational backgrounds are more likely to develop information-seeking behaviours that enable them to access a wider range of resources. These perspectives suggest that formal education equips individuals with cognitive and technical skills that facilitate better information access.

However, some studies have questioned the extent to which education alone determines information access. Lupač (2018) highlights that while education improves access, socio-economic factors, technological infrastructure, and institutional support also play critical roles. For example, individuals with higher education may still face barriers if they lack access to digital resources, experience restrictions due to institutional policies, or are unfamiliar with emerging information retrieval tools. Similarly, van Deursen and van Dijk (2019) argues that digital inequalities persist even among highly educated individuals, particularly when access to advanced digital tools is limited.

The significant but weak relationship observed in this study may be attributed to the structured nature of academic environments, where access to information is often facilitated through institutional databases, libraries, and professional networks. Educators with

higher qualifications may be more familiar with these systems and thus find it easier to access relevant information. However, the low correlation suggests that educational attainment alone does not guarantee unrestricted access, reinforcing the need for complementary factors such as digital literacy, institutional support, and technological infrastructure.

Relationship between Years of Professional Experience and Digital Literacy

The findings indicate that years of professional experience have a low positive but marginally significant relationship with digital literacy among library and information science educators in South-South Nigeria. This suggests that as educators gain more professional experience, their digital literacy levels increase slightly.

This finding aligns with studies that suggest experience alone does not necessarily translate to higher digital literacy. For instance, Gökdas and Çam (2022) argues that digital literacy is more influenced by exposure and engagement with technology rather than the length of professional experience. Similarly, Hecker, Spaulding and Kuehn (2021) found that while older and more experienced professionals may have extensive work knowledge, they do not necessarily possess advanced digital skills unless they actively engage in digital learning opportunities. These perspectives reinforce the idea that digital literacy requires continuous learning and adaptation, rather than simply accumulating years of work experience.

On the other hand, some studies suggest that experience can enhance digital literacy under certain conditions. For example, Rahmatika (2022) found that professionals who actively incorporate technology into their work tend to develop stronger digital skills over time. Similarly, research by Agbro and Agbro (2024) found that while digital literacy skills (e.g.,

electronic mailing skills) significantly predicted job performance, it did not establish a strong link between years of professional experience and digital literacy. However, these benefits are not automatic and depend largely on the individual's willingness to engage with new technologies.

The weak and marginally significant relationship observed in this study may be attributed to the fact that digital literacy is more dependent on deliberate efforts to acquire and apply technological skills rather than the mere passage of time in a professional setting. Many educators with years of experience may not have received formal digital training or may rely on traditional methods, limiting their digital proficiency. Conversely, younger or less experienced educators who actively engage with digital tools and platforms may develop stronger digital literacy regardless of their years in the profession.

Relationship between Years of Professional Experience and Information Access

The findings reveal that years of professional experience have a very low positive but not significant relationship with information access among library and information science educators in South-South Nigeria. This suggests that as educators gain more years of professional experience, their ability to access information improves only slightly.

This finding aligns with research suggesting that professional experience alone is not a strong determinant of information access. For example, Yarima (2024) argues that information access depends more on familiarity with digital tools, search strategies, and institutional support systems than on the number of years spent in a profession. Similarly, Wilson's (2020) information-seeking behaviour model emphasises that access to information is shaped by external factors such as technology availability, workplace

policies, and personal motivation rather than experience alone. These perspectives suggest that unless professionals actively engage in learning new information-seeking strategies, experience alone may not significantly enhance their ability to access information.

On the contrary, some studies indicate that experienced professionals may develop more efficient methods of accessing and evaluating information over time. For instance, Tenopir et al. (2009) found that librarians and educators with extensive experience tend to refine their search strategies and make more selective use of information sources. Similarly, Freiburg and Klein, (2022) suggests that experienced professionals may develop stronger tacit knowledge, allowing them to navigate information systems more effectively. However, these benefits are often contingent on continuous professional development and adaptation to evolving information landscapes.

The weak and insignificant relationship found in this study may be due to the growing reliance on digital platforms for information access. Educators with less digital training or engagement may struggle to retrieve information efficiently, while those more familiar with digital tools and online databases may have an advantage, regardless of years in the profession.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that educational qualifications and years of experience significantly correlate with digital literacy and information access among Library and Information Science (LIS) lecturers in Southern Nigerian universities. Educators possessing advanced qualifications and extensive professional experience exhibited superior proficiency in digital tools and enhanced access to pertinent information resources. These findings highlight the necessity for ongoing professional development and specialised digital literacy training to

address deficiencies and improve teaching and research efficacy within LIS departments.

Recommendations

The following are recommended:

1. Universities should frequently organize workshops and training programs to enhance the digital literacy skills of LIS educators with lower qualifications or fewer years of experience.
2. Policies should be in place to motivate and assist institutions to upgrade their academic staff by encouraging them to undertake further education and training. Academic staff with higher qualifications are found to be more digitally competent and capable of accessing more information.
3. University management must provide digital tools, infrastructure and online resources for LIS education professionals to enhance quality of teaching, research and other professional activities.
4. To create a better digital world, veteran teachers will be encouraged to train young professionals on how to use different digital resources effectively and creatively.

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