

**Prospects of Law Information Literacy in Promoting Career Excellence among the
Undergraduate Students of
University of Abuja**

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Abstract

The study investigates the prospects of law information literacy in promoting career excellence among undergraduate students of the University of Abuja. The study aims to ascertain undergraduate law students' knowledge of the concept of information literacy, determine the relevance of information literacy in promoting law undergraduate students' career excellence while in school, identify ways information literacy can add credence to law students in school and transition into practice and to determine constraints to adopting information literacy as a course by law undergraduate students. A sample of 125 students was randomly selected for the study. The questionnaire was designed to collect data from the respondents. The obtained data were analyzed using frequency tables and mean scores of four-scale ratings. The study reveals that the majority of law undergraduate students lack a clear knowledge of the concept of information literacy in a profession that is information seeking incline. This should be a major concern for the profession, knowing that the legal profession is entrusted with the mandate to control and enforce the body of rule of conduct binding force of a particular society or nation. The study uncovers information literacy knowledge is an eye opener to law undergraduate students of the need for information in their career. The knowledge serves as an influencer that drives the need for the acquisition of information that enhances their study and research work by applying it ethically in the profession and findings also reveal that the knowledge and skills acquired through the information literacy course will empower the students with search skills in finding and accessing authentic and needed information, and how to create, locate, analyze, interpret, and communicate it. The researcher suggested that law information literacy should be integrated into the law curriculum for a better understanding of the concept. Provision of qualified human resources should employed and engaged in the teaching of the course. Lastly, the students should be encouraged to take the course information literacy seriously as the acquisition of information is the bedrock of their profession.

Keywords: Prospects, Law information literacy, career excellence, undergraduate students, university of Abuja

Introduction

Information spurs knowledge and skill acquisition for experts in all subject areas. With the regular trend of transition in various disciplines, information serves as a rejuvenator in all

persons craving to stand out among their counterparts in a field. Stand to be corrected; law as a profession is information seeker incline, which means tolling with their information literacy translates to stifling life out the profession. According to Devika (2021), Law is defined as a large body of rules and regulations based mainly on general principles of justice, fair play, and convenience, which have been worked out and promulgated by governmental bodies to regulate human activities and define what is, and what is not permissible conduct in various situations. Devika further states that law is a pattern of conduct to which actions do, or ought to conform. Also, Ijas (2023) adds that law is a principle and regulation established in a particular community by an authority and applicable to its people, whether in the form of legislation or custom and policies recognized and enforced by State authority. From the definition, the law as a profession can only remain relevant when the professionals are adequately empowered with their information literacy knowledge to facilitate the retrieval of information for decision-making when arises.

Literacy in the context of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), (2006) helps develop individuals' intellectual abilities of reasoning and critical thinking and enables them to learn how to learn. Therefore, the integration of information literacy into the law faculty curriculum will mean life assurance for quality professionalism as a lawyer without adequate information is a casualty about to happen. Knowing the indispensable worth of information in human capacity building and knowledge development, law students must be fully guided and trained to be skillfully literate in information creation, the value, use, evaluation of the source, and confirmation of the source authenticity. Thus, the above, knowledge will promote quality education excellence in the students both in school and in transition to the workplace. Being literate means one ability to interpret identified gathered data as information needs that are processed and organized into meaningful useful knowledge.

With, the challenge of accessing Lawyer's information needs to address clients' needs makes the incorporation of information literacy into the legal education curriculum imperative as the knowledge acquired serves as a pointer to identify problems, how information can be generated, where to seek the right information, how to evaluate the source, and how to use it judiciously to benefit the profession in a competitive knowledge society where information is at the tip of one finger. Waller, Miller, and Schultz (2019) Information literacy is the ability to find, evaluate, organize, use, and communicate information in all its various formats, most notably in situations requiring decision-making, problem-solving, or the acquisition of knowledge. It is a combination of research skills, critical thinking skills, computer technology skills, and communication skills. Similarly, Yi and Meiya (2019) observed that information literacy will help to cultivate in law students the ability to find legal information, control and use legal resources and pay attention to their training on legal research thinking. Therefore, the use of a variety of legal information retrieval tools, the comprehensive use of retrieval skills, and the cultivation of legal information analysis and processing ability are the key points that will help law students improve their ability to solve practical legal problems.

Forster, (2017) agrees with Yi and Meiya's view that one must know when research evidence or other relevant legal, business, personal, or other information is required, how to find it, how to

critique it, and how to integrate it into one's knowledge base. Also, Donatus, Obinyan, and Osezua (2020) noted that information literacy empowers students and practitioners specifically lawyers and their students with valuable insights that ensure quality academic and research outputs capable of expanding career opportunities in the burgeoning information economy. Furthermore, information literacy enhances users' search skills of finding and accessing needed information as well as the ability to analyze and evaluate search findings. Garner and Rugg, (2005) also added that information literacy blends legal and ethical issues with the use of information, appropriate citation, and referencing to acknowledge other people's work.

Information literacy is a set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and a comprehensive set of capabilities that use the information to create new knowledge and participate reasonably in the learning community (Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), 2016; Yu, 2016; and Gregory, 2017). While, ALA/ACRL/STS (2000) sees information literacy as a set of abilities to identify the need for information, procure information, evaluate the information, and subsequently revise the strategy for obtaining the information, and how to use it ethically and legally to engage in lifelong learning. Information literacy incorporates a set of skills and abilities that everyone needs to undertake information-related tasks; for instance, how to discover access, interpret, analyze, manage, create, communicate, store, and share information (Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP), 2018). The preceding views are indicators for the urgent integration of information literacy into the law curriculum with the dynamic nature of professionalism in the field.

The researchers' plot study influenced this work, knowing how significant the profession is in a highly competitive knowledge society faced with one challenge or the other. It is most worrisome that the majority of the students lack the relevant skills and knowledge to know what information is needed, what sources to consult for the authenticity of the information, and how to evaluate the information to address their problem independently of the library staff. The question is what happens when they move into the practice after graduation from the institution? The study aimed to examine the following objectives:

1. Ascertain undergraduate law students' knowledge of the concept of information literacy
2. Determine the relevance of information literacy in promoting law undergraduate students' career excellence while in school
3. Identify ways information literacy can add credence to law students in school and transition into practice
4. Determine constraints to adopting information literacy as a course by law undergraduate students

Methodology

The study was conducted at the University of Abuja to investigate the prospects of law information literacy in promoting the career excellence of undergraduate students. A sample of 125 students was randomly selected for the study. This is to ascertain whether the students know

the prospects of information literacy in adding value to their careers both in school and in the transition to practice. The questionnaire was designed to collect data from the respondents. The obtained data were analyzed using frequency tables and mean scores of four-scale ratings. That is any mean score of 2.50 and above is considered positive and accepted and any score below 2.50 is regarded as negative and rejected.

Results

Table 1: Distributions of Administered Questionnaire to Respondents

S/No	Level	Number of Students	Percentages
1	100	32	25.6
2	200	26	20.8
3	300	29	23.2
4	400	38	30.4
	Total	125	100

Table 1 above shows the distributions of questionnaires that were administered to the four levels of law undergraduate students of the University of Abuja. One hundred and twenty-five questionnaires were administered and were all duly completed and returned, representing 100% as the response rate.

Table 2: Law Students' Knowledge of the Concept of Information Literacy

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Means	SD	Decision
1	I have a clear knowledge of the concept of information literacy	21	15	46	43	2.11	1.06	Disagreed
2	As a student, I lack the knowledge of the concept of information literacy	39	19	52	15	2.65	1.04	Agreed
3	I heard the word information literacy but never cared making enquire about its meaning	53	24	31	17	2.90	1.10	Agreed
4	I got the knowledge from the lecture hall	20	0	64	41	1.99	0.98	Disagreed
5	I knew about the information literacy concept from personal study	48	22	34	21	2.77	1.13	Disagreed

Table 2 contains the knowledge of the concept of information literacy by law students which included clear knowledge of the concept of information literacy, lack the knowledge of the concept of information literacy, hearing the word information literacy but never caring to enquire of its meaning, got the knowledge from the lecture hall and knew about the information literacy concept from personal study. These have mean scores of 2.11, 2.65, 2.90, 1.99, and 2.77 respectively, which indicate agreement and disagreement.

Table 3: Relevance of Information Literacy in Promoting Undergraduate Law Students Career Excellence

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Means	SD	Decision
6	As an individual information literacy skills will enable me to identify the need for information in my study and research work	68	35	20	2	3.35	0.80	Agreed
7	The knowledge will awaken the craving for information acquisition	32	49	28	16	2.77	0.97	Agreed
8	This will enhance my ability to use information ethically in my career	47	56	20	2	3.18	0.75	Agreed
9	Information will empower me to legally engage in life-long learning	70	22	16	17	3.16	1.10	Agreed
10	To see timely information as a key factor in the law profession	44	38	10	33	2.74	1.19	Agreed

Table 3 shows the responses of the students on the relevance of information literacy in promoting career excellence. The respondents agreed with all items that it is a major factor that will promote their career with the following mean scores: 3.35, 3.18, 3.16, 2.74, and 2.77.

Table 4: Ways Information Literacy Skills Will Add Credence to Law Students' Transition into Practice

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Decision
11	Knowledge acquired in information literacy can be used for search skills in finding and accessing needed information with ease	61	49	15	0	3.36	0.69	Agree
12	The knowledge will help to create, store, manage, analyze, interpret, communicate, disseminate, and apply the information for results independently	39	55	28	3	3.04	0.79	Agree
13	The knowledge can be used to navigate the legal information retrieval tools in solving practical legal challenges	13	80	19	13	2.74	0.78	Agree
14	The knowledge can be used in organizing workshops to facilitate access to legal information in both manual and digital formats.	47	64	14	0	3.26	0.64	Agree

Table 4 uncovers ways information literacy skills can add credence to law students' transition into practice with the means scores of 3.36, 3.26, 3.04, and 2.74 respectively, which indicates agreement.

Table 5: Constrains to Adopting Information Literacy as a Course by Undergraduate Law Students

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Means	SD	Decision
15	The Relevance of information literacy is not clearly defined in the profession	62	7	31	25	2.84	1.23	Agreed
16	Lack of lecturers' interest in integrating information literacy into the law courses	16	21	49	39	2.11	0.99	Disagreed
17	Lack of experts to teach the course information literacy	28	12	51	34	2.27	1.09	Disagreed
18	No senate approval for the course	9	30	69	17	2.24	0.77	Disagreed

Table 5 identifies the relevance of information literacy not clearly defined in the profession with a mean score of 2.84 which indicated accepted. Lecturers' lack of interest in integrating information literacy into law courses, lack of experts to teach the course information literacy, and no senate approval for the course with the means scores 2.27, 2.24, and 2.11 respectively which means not accepted.

Discussion of Findings

The discussion is based on the findings of the study in line with its objectives.

Law undergraduate Students' Knowledge of the Concept of Information Literacy

The study reveals that the majority of law undergraduate students lack a clear knowledge of the concept of information literacy in a profession that is information seeking incline. This should be a major concern for the profession, knowing that the legal profession is entrusted with the mandate to control and enforce the body of rule of conduct binding force of a particular society or nation. To this end, the profession will be living below its expectations without basic information literacy skills, information birth knowledge that makes one intelligent, and most times the knowledge translates into an understanding of a subject matter for impactful application. This agrees with the study of Lawal, (2014) says it is practically difficult for one to achieve the target of planned studies without putting some basic information literacy skills to work. The study further noted that information literacy skills are required to equip people with decisive literacy skills that will assist them to be independent life-long learners.

Relevance of Information Literacy in Promoting Law undergraduate Students' Career Excellence while in school

The study uncovers information literacy knowledge is an eye opener to law undergraduate students of the need for information in their career. The knowledge serves as an influencer that drives the need for the acquisition of information that enhances their study and research work by applying it ethically in the profession. It reveals that it fosters the desire for life-long learning in the students. This is in line with the study of Waller, Miller, and Schultz (2019) that said information literacy skills allow students to work more independently, to engage with the

research 'cutting edge', to appreciate the plural and contested nature of the subject, and to place their work within its broader academic context. The study further states that Information literacy is essential for academic success, effective functioning in the workplace, and participation in society as knowledgeable citizens. Similarly, Yi and Meiya (2019) observed that information literacy will help to cultivate in law students the ability to find legal information, control and use legal resources and pay attention to their training on legal research thinking.

Information Literacy and Credence to Law Students in School and Transition into Practice

The study reveals ways information literacy can help value law undergraduate students. The knowledge and skills acquired through the information literacy course will empower the students with search skills in finding and accessing authentic and needed information, and how to create, locate, analyze, interpret, and communicate it. Also, the knowledge enhances the student's ability to navigate legal information retrieval tools in solving practical legal challenges. Similarly, Donatus, Obinyan&Osezua (2020) affirm that the importance of information literacy skills cannot be overemphasized as they equip students and practitioners with valuable insights that guarantee quality academic and research outputs capable of expanding career opportunities in the burgeoning information economy.

Constraints to Adopting Information Literacy as a Course by Undergraduate Law Students

The results identify the relevance of information literacy not clearly defined to the students and that translates to their non-chalant attitude about the quest for information which was identified as the main constraint to adopting it. Also, the lack of lecturers' interest in integrating into the legal curriculum constitutes another hindrance. The study is contrary to that Lawal (2014) noted information literacy skills deficiency among undergraduate law students in many countries which suggests that many are ill-prepared for the workplace. The study added that little research has been undertaken in the field of legal information literacy in contrast to many other academic areas. From the assertion above, for law undergraduate students to see the need for information as the backbone of their career the integration of information literacy into legal education.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is very that law undergraduate students cannot strive to the height of their careers without embedding information literacy skills in them through the integration of information literacy into the legal education curriculum. As literacy skills give credence to the students' careers and the transition to practice.

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