



DIGITAL LITERACY SKILLS AND USE OF LIBRARY BY SS3 STUDENTS IN SELECTED PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS, RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of digital literacy skills and the utilisation of electronic information resources on the use of the library among Senior Secondary School 3 (SS3) students in selected private secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. Although the digital shift offers new learning opportunities, it has also created a problem of underutilization and a potential misalignment between students' needs and use of library resources. The study was motivated by the growing concern over declining library patronage in the digital era and the need to understand how students' digital competencies shape their engagement with library services. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population comprised 1,930 SS3 students from 4 selected private secondary schools in Rivers State, with a sample size of 179 purposively selected. Data was collected using a structured and validated questionnaire. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient reliability test ranged from 0.905 to 0.948, indicating high internal consistency. The findings revealed that digital literacy skills have a significant positive influence on the use of the library (Adj. $R^2 = 0.364$, $F(4, 174) = 26.438$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that students with higher digital competencies are more likely to engage effectively with library resources and services. In conclusion, digital literacy skills strengthen the use of the library. The study recommends that private school management should strengthen digital literacy training that enhances the use of school libraries. The school management should develop hybrid learning hubs that integrate both physical and digital services.

Keywords: Digital literacy, digital literacy skills, library use, secondary school students, Rivers State

Introduction

The library stands as one of humanity's most profound and enduring institutions of collective memory that contains intellectual

content that is valuable to the teaching and learning of the school. From the ancient archives of Alexandria to the modern digital repositories, the fundamental mission of the library has persisted to collect, organize, preserve, and provide access to information



for the enlightenment and advancement of its users (Carr, 2020). The value of libraries in driving academic success is undeniable. Far more than just quiet study spaces, they are dynamic centers for knowledge and personality grooming, fundamental to educational and national advancement. As Oyelude (2022) notes, the vitality of a library directly reflects the reading culture of its community.

In today's knowledge economy, libraries are the storehouses that equip us to become civilized, prosperous, and effective citizens (Ladele, 2022). However, their true power is only realized through effective use. This goes beyond occasional visits; it means people go to the library for research, acquire their textbooks, and utilize spare time for exploratory reading. It is this very consistency that transforms the library from a passive repository into an active partner in learning, directly benefiting academic performance and fostering a lifelong love of knowledge. Peter (2021) stated that the library is a dynamic ecosystem of knowledge, a democratizing force for public enlightenment, and a physical manifestation of the human desire to understand the world and our place within it.

The library is a place of memory in a literal sense, where knowledge is stored in material form. The design of these spaces, from the grandeur of reading rooms to the quiet carrels, is intended to facilitate study and preserve collections. Matthews (2021) emphasizes the enduring importance of the library as a physical destination, arguing that "the library as a place provides a necessary sanctuary for contemplation and focused work, an increasingly rare commodity in the modern world. Its very architecture is designed to inspire learning and signify the cultural importance of knowledge.

Nicholson (2021) passionately argued for the preservation of physical artifacts, particularly card catalogs and original newspaper volumes, asserting that "libraries are the guardians of our cultural fingerprint, and that fingerprint is smudged, if not erased, when the original physical evidence is discarded in the name of digital progress. The book as an object carries historical evidence that is lost in a sanitized digital surrogate. Matthew (2020) observes in his history of the library, "Libraries have always been built as much to overawe as to serve. The great reading room of the British Museum, with its vast dome and radiating desks, was a panopticon of learning, a space that organized readers and books into a single, powerful visual field, making the pursuit of knowledge a visible, almost liturgical act. The arrangement of books on shelves creates an intellectual topography. The serendipity of stumbling upon a text one did not know one was looking for is a direct result of this physical, spatial ordering. The library stack is a machine for unplanned connections, a vital organ of the creative process.

As Shannon (2021) explores in her work on library design, the central library is more than a service point; it is a civic monument. Its scale, durability, and prominent location assert the enduring public value of knowledge and collective memory. Libraries are used by students of all ages as a primary source for completing assignments and accessing materials not available elsewhere. For many, especially those from low-income households, the library is their only access to the internet and academic databases necessary for school success (Horrigian, 2022). Jaeger et al. (2020) argue that libraries have become de facto technology hubs in their communities by providing free access to technology and digital literacy instruction.



They serve as a vital social safety net, ensuring that no one is entirely excluded from participation in the digital public sphere.

In a study on library use and well-being, Goulding (2019) found that “the library's role as a quiet refuge is highly valued by patrons”. The ability to find a peaceful space for reading, thinking, or simply being in a public setting was frequently cited as a key benefit, contributing significantly to reductions in stress and feelings of overcrowding at home. The vast and varied roles of the library as a repository of knowledge, a hub for digital inclusion, and a sanctuary for community establish a powerful model of an open-access institution dedicated to the public good. These principles of equitable access, curated collections, and expert guidance form the bedrock of the library's mission in society. However, this foundational role is nowhere more focused or critical than within the specific, mission-driven ecosystem of a school.

Igun (2021) stated, the library is a storehouse of knowledge that students, no matter how brilliant, should not ignore. This sentiment is echoed by researchers who have found that libraries provide the essential, relevant, and current information required for achieving academic goals (Oyedum, 2022). It is therefore expected that students who understand this value and actively utilize library resources will position themselves for greater academic achievement (Kuh & Gonyea, 2020). While the library serves as an indispensable storehouse of knowledge for individuals, its effectiveness is often hampered by deeply ingrained challenges such as library anxiety, a lack of information literacy skills, and an underdeveloped reading culture among individuals. This points to a foundational gap that must be

addressed earlier in the educational journey. This is where the role of the school library becomes paramount in their educational journey.

A school library is a learning resource center located within an educational institution, designed to support and enrich the school's curriculum and foster a love of reading and learning. It is more than just a collection of books; it is a dynamic and collaborative space that provides students and staff with access to a wide range of resources in various formats, including fiction and non-fiction books, reference materials, periodicals, digital media, and online databases. Analyzing this frequency helps assess the library's overall impact and effectiveness within its community. The use of library resources cannot be accomplished without the information literacy skills of users, as they play a crucial role in locating information resources within the library. The role of the use of libraries in enhancing literacy and academic performance has also been strongly affirmed. Ogunbekun et al. working in Niger State, found that the use of library services makes a significant contribution to literacy development and academic achievement. Their work confirms that providing adequate library services is not merely supplementary but foundational to students' academic growth. In Oyo State, Owolabi et al (2020). investigated the use of library among public secondary school students, emphasizing that students with stronger information literacy competencies are better able to navigate, evaluate, and use library resources effectively. Their findings underscore the necessity of integrating information literacy instruction into secondary school education.

Ekpoma (2021) reveals that the use of library resources is strongly influenced by students' ability to identify their information



needs and access suitable materials. Their research shows that when libraries provide adequate and accessible resources, especially for special needs students, usage increases significantly, enabling learners to engage more meaningfully with academic tasks. The importance of effective use of library is emphasized in the study by Akande (2022) at the University of Ibadan in Warri-South, Delta State. His research highlights that students who develop reading interest and receive external support are more likely to utilize library facilities consistently. This demonstrates that the use of the library is not only determined by resource availability but also by the student's motivation and personal engagement with reading materials.

Olawale (2021). Predictors of Use of School Library Makerspace by Secondary School Students in Ibadan, Nigeria showed that students' perceived usefulness of a makerspace and their attitude toward innovation were significant predictors of their use of the school library's makerspace. Owolabi et al. (2025) stated that students who know how to find, evaluate, and use information make greater use of the library. However, in modern times, the ability for students to acquire a large amount of information is linked to the students' ability to navigate a complex digital world. This reality makes the cultivation of digital literacy skills, the capacity to locate, evaluate, create, and communicate information using digital technology, a core component of the modern school library's mission, moving beyond traditional literacy to prepare students for the demands of their academic coursework.

Digital literacy skills are the capabilities required to live, learn, and work in a society where communication and access to information are increasingly mediated by

digital technologies. It goes far beyond simply knowing how to use a computer or a smartphone. At its heart, digital literacy is the ability to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information effectively and responsibly using digital technology. It is a foundational skill for modern citizenship and employability. For students to make proper use of the available information resources, students need to acquire adequate digital literacy skills. The American Library Association (2021) described Digital literacy skills as the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills. A digitally literate individual can critically evaluate the information they encounter online, understanding that 'authority is constructed and contextual and that information sources must be scrutinized based on their origin and purpose (ACRL Framework, 2020).

Digital literacy skills extend beyond simply knowing how to operate a smartphone; they encompass the ability to find, evaluate, use, and create information digitally, effectively, and ethically. A student with high digital literacy skills is better equipped to navigate both physical libraries. According to Adeyinka (2020), digital literacy skills will help students understand online catalogues, use databases effectively, and critically assess the credibility of information they find online. According to AI Attas (2020), the ability of students to find, evaluate, share, and create content using information technologies and the internet is referred to as digital literacy.

Students who lack these skills may find digital systems intimidating or waste time on irrelevant or unreliable sources, which could lead to frustration and a preference for avoiding both electronic resources and the



library that provides them. The digital divide is no longer just about access to technology, but about the skills to use it effectively. Without digital literacy, students with access to the internet and electronic resources are still at a significant academic disadvantage (Chukwuedo & Ogwunte, 2020). Digital literacy skills are the abilities required to properly, effectively, and efficiently deal with all issues concerning the digital scope; they are necessary to survive and navigate the digital landscape. Digital literacy skills include technological awareness, know-how, and incorporation of skills to actively handle digital processes and issues that may arise this as stated by Lynch (2022).

Developing these digital literacy skills is not an abstract exercise; it is applied and honed through the active and critical utilization of electronic resources. Mastery of these competencies is measured by a student's ability to navigate the library's digital ecosystem, which includes accessing scholarly articles from online databases, critically evaluating information found on websites, and responsibly using e-books and multimedia archives for research. Therefore, the transition from learning a skill to applying it is realized when students seamlessly leverage these electronic tools to inquire, analyze, and create new knowledge.

1.1 Statement of the problem

The school library is a fundamental institution for supporting academic achievement, particularly for Senior Secondary School (SS3) students in Nigeria who are preparing for critical external examinations. However, in the contemporary digital era, the traditional model of the library as a primary source of information is being fundamentally challenged. The rapid proliferation of the internet and digital technologies has radically altered the information-seeking behaviors of students,

who increasingly turn to online sources and electronic resources for their academic needs (Global Education Monitor, 2023; Adewumi, 2022). While this digital shift offers new learning opportunities, it has also created a significant problem of underutilization and a potential misalignment between students' needs and use of library resources. A preliminary observation and emerging literature suggest that the levels of digital literacy skills can improve students use of library today. A growing body of evidence indicates a marked decline in the patronage of physical library spaces, coinciding with the increased availability of internet-based information and digital learning platforms (Adewumi, 2022). However, the precise nature of this influence in the selected private secondary schools understudy remains poorly understood and empirically underexplored. It is based on this aforementioned that this study seeks to examine influence of digital literacy skills on the use of library by SS3 students in selected private secondary school in Rivers State.

Objective of the study

The general objective of this study is to investigate the influence of digital literacy skills on the use of the library by Senior Secondary School (SS3) students in selected private secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. This study seeks to achieve the following specific objectives:

1. find out the level of library use among SS3 students of selected private secondary schools in Rivers State.
2. examine the level of digital literacy skills possessed by SS3 students of selected private secondary schools in Rivers State.
3. investigate the influence of digital literacy skills on the use of library by



SS3 students of selected private secondary schools in River State.

Research questions

1. What is the level of digital literacy skills among SS3 students of selected private secondary schools in River State?
2. What is the level of library use among SS3 students of selected private secondary schools in River State

Hypothesis

The null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance to determine the relationship among variables in the study.

Ho1: Digital literacy skills have no significant influence on library use by SS3 students in selected private secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Literature Review

This section provides an overview of the literature reviewed and its relevance to the study.

Use of the Library

The concept of use of library refers to the deliberate, purposeful, and sustained engagement of students with library resources and services to meet their academic, informational, and research needs. The library is a repository of knowledge of different subjects offered in the secondary curriculum. The use of the library emphasizes active interaction with library materials, including both print and electronic resources. Library resources typically comprise textbooks, reference books, journals, magazines, newspapers, and digital materials such as e-books, online databases, and multimedia content. Library services include borrowing and returning materials, consultation of reference materials, use of reading rooms, access to electronic

catalogues, and guidance from librarians in locating and utilizing information effectively. The use of the library is a multidimensional activity encompassing the acquisition, retrieval, and application of information to support learning and academic achievement (Aladeniyi & Owokole, 2020).

Studies have consistently highlighted the critical role of library use in academic performance, Ogunbekun (2020) observed that the use of school libraries directly contributes to literacy development and enhances students' learning outcomes. When students actively engage with library resources, they develop the ability to locate relevant information, analyze content critically, and integrate knowledge into their academic work. For SS3 students preparing for national examinations, this engagement is particularly crucial, as effective use of library resources supports research projects, independent study, and examination preparation. The use of library, therefore, is not merely a supplementary academic activity but an essential aspect of students' educational development, influencing both knowledge acquisition and cognitive skill development (Akande, 2018).

Awareness and accessibility of library resources are significant determinants of library use. Ojohwoh (2022) found that students are more likely to use the library when they are aware of the services offered and can easily access both print and electronic materials. Attah & Olayinka (2020) further emphasized that the frequency and depth of library use are influenced by the availability of current, relevant, and well-organized resources. Students who encounter a well-resourced library with appropriate study spaces and functional ICT facilities are more likely to engage consistently with library services. Conversely, the absence of adequate facilities, limited access to digital



tools, and unavailability of essential resources can hinder students' engagement with the library, even if they possess strong academic motivation. These findings underscore the interplay between the library environment and students' ability to use the library effectively.

The use of library is closely linked to students' reading habits and information-seeking behavior. Akande (2020) reported that students with a high interest in reading are more inclined to use the library regularly, while parental involvement further enhances this tendency. Students who are encouraged by teachers, parents, or peers to utilize library resources demonstrate higher engagement, suggesting that social and environmental factors play a role in determining library use. Furthermore, Solomon and Ambrose (2022) highlighted that consistent engagement with library resources develops students' analytical and critical thinking skills, as they learn to compare, evaluate, and synthesize information from multiple sources. In this sense, library use is both an academic and cognitive process, where students not only access information but also learn to apply it meaningfully to solve problems and complete academic tasks.

The integration of digital resources into school libraries has expanded the concept of library use to include electronic engagement. Aina (2020) noted that students' use of libraries increasingly involves interaction with electronic databases, e-books, and online journals. Aroyewun (2021) emphasized that students with adequate digital literacy skills are better able to utilize electronic information resources, which enhances their overall use of the library. In modern educational settings, effective library use requires not only physical presence and access to print materials but also the ability

to navigate digital platforms, evaluate online information critically, and apply it to learning objectives. This dual engagement with print and electronic resources makes the concept of library use more complex and multidimensional, reflecting the evolving nature of educational practices in the digital age.

Library use is also shaped by structured interventions, such as guidance and instructions provided by librarians. Fechukwu and Agbai (2020) reported that students who received formal library instruction demonstrated higher competence in locating and using both print and electronic resources. Library instruction programs, orientation sessions, and workshops on information retrieval and research strategies enhance students' confidence and proficiency in using the library. Similarly, promotional activities by schools to create awareness about library services, resource availability, and digital tools play a critical role in encouraging students to engage more actively with library resources (Olawale et al., 2021).

Digital Literacy Skills

Digital literacy skills represent the practical manifestation of individual capabilities within digital information environments, encompassing a diverse range of competencies that enable effective navigation and participation in increasingly complex digital landscapes (Dada & Oyewole, 2024). Digital literacy skills refer to a broad set of competencies that enable individuals to effectively access, evaluate, create, and communicate information through digital technologies. In the context of library use, digital literacy is particularly significant because modern libraries are increasingly integrating electronic resources alongside traditional print materials, requiring students to navigate both physical



and digital platforms to maximize the benefits of these resources.

Digital literacy skills constitute a critical enabler for purposeful and effective engagement with library resources. These skills include the ability to operate digital devices, access online catalogues, retrieve e-books, navigate academic databases, critically evaluate digital content, and integrate retrieved information into academic work (Chaudhary, 2021). Unlike basic computer literacy, which focuses primarily on the ability to operate devices, digital literacy emphasizes the informed and critical use of technology to enhance learning outcomes.

The concept of digital literacy skills in library use encompasses both technical and cognitive competencies. Technical proficiency allows students to navigate library computers, use online catalogues, and access electronic information resources efficiently. This technical skill is a prerequisite for students to benefit from electronic databases, digital journals, e-books, and other online learning platforms (Yoleri & Anadolu, 2020). Without this foundational ability, students may struggle to locate relevant information or use digital tools effectively, limiting the value derived from the library. Cognitive competencies, on the other hand, include information literacy, critical thinking, and evaluative skills. Students with strong cognitive skills can determine the reliability and relevance of information retrieved, synthesize data from multiple sources, and applying the knowledge meaningfully in academic tasks. Therefore, digital literacy in the library context is not merely about operating technology but about making informed and purposeful use of digital resources.

Information literacy, a core component of digital literacy, is particularly critical for

effective library use. It involves the ability to identify information needs, locate appropriate sources, critically evaluate content, and ethically apply information in academic work (Nikou, 2021; Reddy et al., 2021). In school libraries, this competency ensures that students are not overwhelmed by the abundance of digital information but can extract relevant and accurate data to support learning objectives. Shopova (2020) highlighted that students who lack information literacy skills often struggle to differentiate between credible and non-credible sources, resulting in academic work that is incomplete or inaccurate. Thus, information literacy enables students to engage meaningfully with both print and electronic resources, ensuring that library use contributes positively to academic performance and learning outcomes.

Digital literacy skills also encompass digital communication and collaboration, which are increasingly relevant in library use. Modern libraries provide opportunities for students to collaborate on research projects, participate in online discussion forums, and share resources digitally. These competencies enable students to interact effectively with peers and teachers, exchange information, and contribute meaningfully to collective learning tasks (Vodă et al., 2022). By integrating communication skills with digital proficiency, students can use the library as a dynamic space for collaborative learning, extending its impact beyond individual study to group engagement and problem-solving.

Digital literacy skills are closely linked to the effective use of electronic information resources (EIRs) within the library. Aina (2020) observed that students who possess strong digital competencies are better able to access electronic databases, search for e-books and online journals, and navigate



digital learning platforms effectively. Dokhanian (2020) emphasized that students' perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness of digital tools significantly affect their engagement with library resources. Students with high digital literacy can interact with EIRs more efficiently, retrieving relevant information faster and applying it effectively in academic assignments. This demonstrates that digital literacy is not an isolated skill but a key enabler of meaningful library use, bridging the gap between technology and academic learning.

The importance of digital literacy skills in library use is further highlighted by their impact on independent learning and self-directed study. Digitally literate students can autonomously explore library resources, identify materials that meet their academic needs, and integrate these resources into their study routines (Nikou, 2021). This autonomy promotes active learning, where students take responsibility for their academic progress rather than relying solely on classroom instruction. In the context of SS3 students preparing for senior secondary examinations, digital literacy skills enable efficient access to supplementary learning materials, encourage research-based learning, and foster problem-solving capabilities.

Digital Literacy Skills and Use of library

Numerous empirical studies have been carried out by different researchers on the digital literacy skills and use of library among SS3 secondary school students in Nigeria and other parts of the world. For example, Onohwakpor (2023) studied senior secondary school students in Delta State and reported that students have low ICT literacy skills and that the ICT facilities in the schools are grossly inadequate. Because students lack both digital and information-retrieval competencies, their use of electronic or digital resources is

constrained. This implicates their ability to fully engage with library resources, especially electronic resources, since limited access and weak skills limit how often and how effectively they can use digital library or ICT-enhanced library services.

Marliana and Nurhayati (2020) conducted a pivotal study in Indonesia, employing a Covariance-Based Structural Equation Modeling (CB-SEM) approach to analyze the relationship between digital literacy, the use of e-resources, and the reading culture of students at STMIK Sumedang. Their research, involving a sample of 256 students, found that digital literacy has a strong, significant positive influence on both the use of e-resources and students' reading culture. However, in a critical finding, their model revealed that the use of e-resources itself did not have a significant direct influence on reading culture. This suggests that simply providing access to digital resources is insufficient; the key driver is the underlying digital literacy skills that enable meaningful engagement. A key gap in this study was its narrow definition of "reading culture" merely as a preference for digital formats, and its confinement to an informatics college, which may limit generalizability.

Oyewusi and Oyeboade (2009) examined accessibility and use of library resources by undergraduates in a Nigerian State University of Technology. Their findings showed that while students exhibited a positive attitude toward library resources, inadequate information-searching skills reduced effective use. Even though the study highlighted the importance of digital literacy, it did not explore specific dimensions of digital literacy or how these skills predict students' use of digital library systems, presenting a gap for further investigation.

Dokhanian (2018) assessed factors influencing students' intention to use library



applications and found that perceived usefulness, ease of use, and user satisfaction were the strongest predictors of digital library adoption. Their study confirmed that digital literacy enhances the ability to navigate digital platforms and increases usage intention. However, the authors did not analyze how library application skills connect to broader digital literacy competencies among secondary or tertiary students, leaving gaps about skill acquisition and its direct impact on practical library engagement.

Agina-Obu and Okwu (2021) investigated the impact of digital literacy on university students' use of digital resources in Nigeria and reported that students with higher digital literacy skills demonstrated significantly greater use of e-resources and online library databases. While the study establishes a strong link between digital skills and resource use, it fails to examine contextual barriers such as lack of training, infrastructural constraints, or curriculum support that may influence digital literacy development in schools. Shopova (2014) explored digital literacy among university students and discovered that although students are frequent users of technology, many lack advanced digital competencies required for effective academic information use. She concluded that digital literacy does not naturally develop from everyday technology use but requires intentional educational support. However, her study did not extend these insights to library contexts, leaving a gap concerning how digital literacy programs can enhance students' use of academic libraries. Ángel & colleagues (2022) highlighted that across multiple countries, digital literacy skills significantly enhance students' ability to search for, evaluate, and use information resources. The review showed that digital literacy is

fundamental to academic success and library resource utilization. However, the authors pointed out that many studies examine general digital behavior rather than library-specific systems such as discovery platforms, institutional databases, or library mobile applications. This indicates a gap in research focused explicitly on digital literacy within the library domain.

Chaudhary (2019) demonstrated that structured digital literacy programs improve students' ability to navigate digital academic platforms. Although the findings confirm the importance of training, the study did not assess whether improved digital skills translate into increased use of academic libraries or digital collections. This raises the question of whether digital literacy instruction alone is sufficient to drive library use or whether additional motivational, infrastructural, or instructional factors are needed. Bello (2024) found that digital literacy among library and information science students significantly influenced electronic resource usage, yet noted that many students still struggled with advanced digital skills such as database querying, metadata interpretation, and critical evaluation of online sources. However, the study focused primarily on LIS students, leaving limited insight into students from other faculties who often possess weaker digital literacy foundations. This underscores the need for broader, multi-disciplinary research on digital literacy and library use.

Chukwuedo and Ogwunte (2020) examined the influence of digital literacy and e-resource utilization among university students in South-East Nigeria and found a strong positive relationship between students' digital competence and their ability to effectively use online library tools. Students with higher digital literacy demonstrated better navigation of electronic



journals and databases. However, their study did not explore how school-based digital literacy training programs could improve long-term library use habits, revealing a gap related to intervention outcomes and sustainability.

Yoleri and Anadolu (2021) analyzed undergraduate students' digital literacy skills across several faculties and noted that students with strong technological, information-searching, and problem-solving abilities used institutional library systems more frequently. Their findings showed that digital literacy extends beyond basic computer ability and includes critical skills like evaluating online sources and applying search strategies. Yet, the researchers did not investigate how these skills directly influence students' ability to use specialized library services such as reference consultations, digital repositories, or cataloguing systems. This leaves a gap in understanding how advanced digital literacy connects to deeper levels of library engagement.

Yani and Rosana (2022) assessed the digital literacy skills of senior high school students in Yogyakarta and discovered that while many students demonstrated proficiency with digital devices, their ability to effectively search for academic information remained low. The authors stressed that poor information-searching skills result in minimal use of digital library platforms and other online academic resources. Their study, however, did not examine the role of school libraries in building digital literacy, creating a gap in understanding how librarians can support students' digital skill development.

Shopova (2014) found that although university students frequently use smartphones and computers, many lack higher-order digital skills needed to identify credible information and utilize academic

library tools efficiently. Shopova highlighted that digital literacy does not automatically develop from everyday technology use; instead, it requires structured education and exposure to academic information environments. The study, however, did not extend its findings to evaluate how library instruction programs might help improve these skills, leaving a gap concerning library-based digital literacy interventions.

Ivanovici (2021) conducted a systematic review that emphasized the importance of digital literacy in academic information seeking. Their analysis found that students with low digital skills often avoid library systems because they perceive them as complicated. In contrast, digitally skilled students show confidence in using institutional repositories, library search engines, and digital catalogues. However, the systematic review did not address differences across educational levels, such as comparing secondary school students and university students, leaving an opportunity for studies focused specifically on younger learners' digital literacy and library use.

Attah and Olayinka (2020) investigated students' use of school libraries in Plateau State. They found that while students recognized the value of library resources, many lacked the digital skills required to effectively use online catalogues and e-resources provided by the library. Their research highlighted the connection between digital competency and the ability to benefit from library services, but did not examine digital literacy within the context of 21st-century curriculum demands, leaving a gap related to curriculum library integration.

Nikou (2021) examined workplace literacy and digital adoption but indirectly revealed insights relevant to library use. The study showed that individuals with strong digital literacy skills adopt digital systems more



quickly and demonstrate higher confidence when interacting with technological tools. Applied to academic libraries, this implies that students with higher digital literacy are more likely to engage with complex library systems such as federated search engines and digital archives. The gap here is the lack of direct empirical studies linking workplace-style digital literacy models to student library behaviors. Colleagues (2022) investigated digital literacy among social sciences and humanities students and reported that the ability to critically evaluate online information strongly predicted library database use. Students who lacked analytical digital skills tended to rely on general web searches instead of institutional library collections. However, the study did not propose frameworks libraries could adopt to bridge these skill deficiencies, leaving a gap in practical recommendations for library instruction programs.

Theoretical Framework

This section provides a review of relevant theories and models related to the study. Theories are developed to explain, predict, and comprehend various phenomena. Often, they challenge and expand current knowledge within certain defined assumptions. Additionally, theories serve as the framework that supports a research study and help clarify the reasons why the research problem under investigation exists. Information Seeking Behavior theory guided the dependent variable of use of the library and Technology Acceptance Model to guide Digital literacy skills

2.3.1 Wilson's Model of Information-Seeking Behaviors

Wilson's Model of Information-Seeking Behaviors (1996) is one of the most comprehensive theoretical perspectives explaining why, how, and under what conditions individuals engage in the search

for information. The model is particularly relevant to studying Use of Library among SS3 students, whose academic activities, examination pressures, and digital exposure influence their information needs and patterns. Wilson (1996) argues that information behavior begins when an individual recognizes an information need that must be satisfied to solve an academic problem, complete a task, or achieve a learning goal. For students preparing for high-stakes examinations such as WAEC, NECO, and JAMB, these needs are frequent and diverse, thus prompting a search for reliable sources like the school library. According to Wilson (1997), the school library is one of the formal information systems that students turn to when they perceive it as capable of meeting these needs efficiently.

A major strength of Wilson's model is the emphasis on context. Wilson (1996) states that individuals do not seek information in a vacuum; their behavior is shaped by personal, social, institutional, and environmental factors. Within the secondary school context, students operate in a structured learning environment where teachers, curriculum demands, peer influence, and academic expectations shape their information behaviors. For instance, assignments, debates, project work, and syllabus coverage often require students to visit the school library to obtain supplementary materials. Wilson (1999) further explains that environmental structures, including the availability of information resources, accessibility of the library, opening hours, quality of library services, and presence of trained library staff, strongly affect library use. Therefore, a school environment with a well-equipped library containing textbooks, reference materials, electronic information resources,



and ICT tools creates favorable conditions for effective information seeking and regular library use.

An important contribution of Wilson's model is the identification of intervening variables, which act as barriers or facilitators during the information-seeking process. Wilson (1999) categorizes these into personal, interpersonal, environmental, and system-related factors. Personal factors include attitude towards the library, motivation, reading ability, digital literacy skills, and confidence in using library tools. Interpersonal factors include the influence of teachers, librarians, and peers, which may either encourage or discourage students' engagement with library resources. If teachers frequently recommend library-based assignments or if librarians guide students in using library resources, students are more likely to integrate the library into their information-seeking habits.

Another key dimension of Wilson's model is the concept of information behavior as an iterative process. Wilson (1996) asserts that information seeking is rarely a single-step activity; instead, individuals refine their questions, evaluate their satisfaction with retrieved information, and may re-enter the information-seeking cycle multiple times. Wilson's later work emphasizes the importance of multiple information channels. According to Wilson (2005), modern information seekers rarely rely on a single source; rather, they combine formal and informal channels. Wilson (2005) suggests that when multiple channels are available, users select the one that offers the greatest ease, convenience, and utility. Therefore, school libraries that incorporate electronic databases, educational websites, online catalogues, and digital resources are more likely to attract frequent student use

compared to libraries that rely solely on print materials.

Relevance of the Theory

Wilson's Model of Information-Seeking Behavior is directly relevant to this study as it provides a theoretical basis for understanding the use of library among SS3 students. The model explains that information-seeking is triggered by an individual's recognition of an information need, which in a secondary school context may arise from classroom assignments, examinations, or personal study goals. This aligns with the study's focus, as the frequency and effectiveness of library use among students are influenced by the nature and urgency of their academic information needs. By applying Wilson's model, the study can examine how students' recognition of these needs motivates them to access both physical and electronic library resources, providing a structured framework to interpret library engagement patterns.

For SS3 students preparing for examinations, it is evident that they repeatedly consult textbooks, past questions, internet materials, and library resources to fully understand topics taught in the class and in their curriculum. The library, therefore, becomes an essential part of the information cycle, providing updated materials, quiet reading spaces, and electronic resources that support repeated engagement.

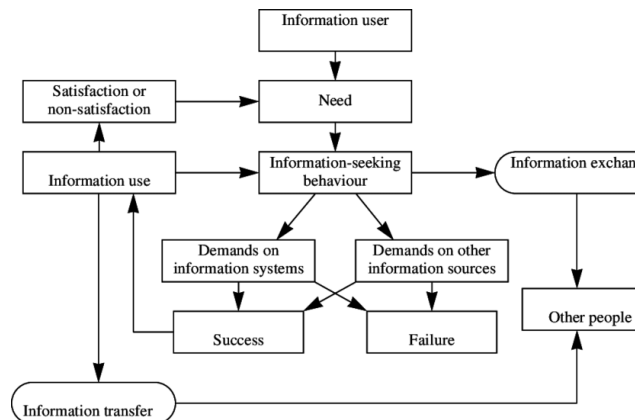


Figure 1: Wilson's Model of Information-Seeking Behaviors (1996)

Technology Acceptance Model (1989) Davis 1989

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), first formalized by Davis (1989), offers a powerful theoretical lens for examining digital literacy skills among students and their impact on engagement with electronic information resources and the school library. At the core of the Technology Acceptance Model are two key constructs: Perceived Usefulness (PU), which refers to the extent to which an individual believes that using a particular technology or system will enhance their performance, productivity, or efficiency. Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) is the degree to which an individual believes that using a particular technology will be free of effort. Davis (1989) posited that these beliefs strongly shape a user's attitude toward using a technology, which in turn influences their behavioral intention and ultimately actual use of the system. In a secondary school environment, students with high digital literacy skills are likely to perceive electronic information resources such as online catalogues, e-journals, and digital libraries as more useful for their academic tasks. Simultaneously, those who find these systems easy to navigate (due to

their competencies) will feel more confident and motivated to adopt them.

Digital literacy skills among students, such as the ability to use search engines, evaluate the credibility of online sources, navigate digital interfaces, and manage digital content, directly contribute to the Technology Acceptance Model's perceived ease of use dimension. As students' proficiency increases, the effort required to use electronic information systems decreases, strengthening their perception of ease of use. Research in educational settings supports this connection: for example, in a study on digital learning technologies. Bowen and Olesova (2021) demonstrated that students who found digital learning tools easy to operate reported greater intention to use them (an extension of the Technology Acceptance Model concept). This suggests that digital literacy competence is an enabler of perceived ease and by extension, fosters more positive attitudes toward technology adoption in academic contexts.

Beyond perceived ease, digital literacy skills also affect perceived usefulness. Students who can skillfully manipulate digital resources perceive a direct benefit from using them, as they can complete research tasks more efficiently, access up-to-date materials, and prepare more effectively for exams. Empirical research supports this. In studies of educational technology adoption, the Technology Acceptance Model has been repeatedly validated: Granić & Marangunić (2019), among others, have shown that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are strong, consistent predictors of technology acceptance in school settings. For students specifically, high digital literacy should amplify their belief in the utility of library e-resources, reinforcing their intention to integrate digital tools into their learning routines. Handayani



and Ubaidillah (2022) applied the Technology Acceptance Model to investigate the use of ICT in English language learning and found that ICT skills, motivation, and equipment significantly influenced perceived usefulness and ease of use, which in turn affected actual ICT use. These findings directly reinforce the idea that enhancing SS3 students' digital literacy through structured interventions can strengthen their technology acceptance.

Another dimension of Technology Acceptance Model relevance is its adaptability. In educational technology research lends strong theoretical support for its use in investigating digital literacy among SS3 students (Abdullah & Ward, 2016). The Technology Acceptance Model offers practical guidance for interventions. If the study finds that perceived ease of use is low among SS3 students, then school administrators and librarians can focus on digital literacy training programs, orientation to the library's electronic resources, and peer mentoring. If perceived usefulness is the barrier, then educators can demonstrate the academic benefits of e-resources, such as better assignment outcomes or more efficient revision, making explicit connections between digital tools and academic success. These strategies are directly aligned with the Technology Acceptance Model structure and validated by empirical research; Mohammed and Syed (2022) found that in Ghanaian universities, perceived usefulness and ease of use significantly predicted students' collaborative learning intentions via social media based on the Technology Acceptance Model.

Relevance of the model to this study

This theory is relevant to this study because it clearly explains how SS3 students' digital literacy skills influence their willingness and ability to use the school

library. As senior secondary students preparing for WAEC, NECO, and other examinations, SS3 learners rely heavily on information for revision, assignments, and project work. TAM proposes that students will use digital tools when they perceive them as useful for improving their academic performance and easy to use in completing learning tasks. Digital literacy skills make these perceptions possible: SS3 students who know how to search the internet, evaluate websites, use e-library portals, and download materials are more likely to see library technologies as helpful for exam preparation and simple to navigate. This increases both their confidence and motivation to use electronic library resources. Therefore, TAM supports the idea that stronger digital literacy skills empower SS3 students to access reliable online information quickly, use digital catalogues efficiently, and engage more deeply with library services, ultimately enhancing their academic success.

Methodology

The study adopted a survey research design which enables the researcher to gather data from respondents and to analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The population of the study comprised 1,930 Senior Secondary School class 3 in Jephthah Comprehensive Secondary School 500 students, Trinitate International School 480 students, GreenOak International School 540 students and Royal Girls Academy 410 students of Rivers State, Nigeria. The sample size of 331 was derived using Taro Yamani formula Taro Yamane formula:

According to Yamane (1967):
$$n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$$

n= sample size

N= population size

e = error of sampling

Thus: N= 1,930 (SS3 students) and e= 0.05



$$N = 1,930 / (1 + 1,930 (0.05)^2)$$

$$n = 1,930 / (1 + 1,930 (0.0025))$$

$$n = 1,930 / (1 + 4.825)$$

Therefore, the sample size is 331.

A simple random sampling technique will be employed to eliminate bias in respondent selection and enhance the representativeness of the study population, and a stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure adequate representation across the selected schools. The proportional allocation for each ministry was calculated based on its population size relative to the total population (1,930). The formula used is:

$$n_i = (N_i / N) \times n$$

Where:

n_i = sample size for each school

N_i = population for each school

Jephthah Comprehensive Secondary School: $500 \setminus 1930 \times 331 = 86$

Trinitate International School: $480 \setminus 1930 \times 331 = 82$

$$n = 1,930 / 5.825$$

$$n = 331.33$$

$$n = 331$$

GreenOak International School $540 \setminus 1930 \times 331 = 93$

Royal Girls Academy $410 \setminus 1930 \times 331 = 70$

From each stratum, simple random sampling will be used to distribute questionnaires to students across different arms of SS3 in the different schools.

The main instrument for data collection was a structured and validated questionnaire to elicit responses to the research questions. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics; the research questions was analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. The hypothesis was analyzed using multiple linear regression.

Data Analysis, Interpretation and Discussion of the Findings

1. What is the level of library use among SS3 students of selected private secondary schools in Rivers State?



Table 1: Level of library use

USE OF LIBRARY BY SS3 STUDENTS	VLL Freq. (%)	LL Freq. (%)	HL Freq. (%)	VHL Freq. (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)
Purpose of Library Use (Mean = 3.32, SD = 0.76)						
I use the school library to read and study for my examinations (WAEC, NECO, JAMB, etc.) to a...	1 (0.6)	21 (11.7)	56 (31.3)	101 (56.4)	3.44	0.72
I use the library to borrow textbooks and reference materials for my assignments to a...	1 (0.6)	28 (15.6)	62 (34.6)	88 (49.2)	3.32	0.76
I use the library to access past questions and revision materials to a...	4(2.2)	21 (11.7)	57 (31.8)	97 (54.2)	3.38	0.78
I use the library to conduct research for my school assignments and group work to a...	4(2.2)	31 (17.3)	78 (43.6)	66 (36.9)	3.15	0.78
Types of Materials Used (Mean = 3.24, SD = 0.81)						
I use textbooks and reference books in the library to a.....	3 (1.7)	22 (12.3)	66 (36.9)	88 (49.2)	3.34	0.76
I use electronic resources (computers, e-books, internet) in the library to a...	10 (5.6)	28 (15.6)	70 (39.1)	71 (39.7)	3.13	0.87
I consult with librarians to help me locate information resources to a...	11 (6.1)	27 (15.1)	78 (43.6)	63 (35.2)	3.08	0.86
I use the library's quiet environment to study without distractions to a...	3 (1.7)	18 (10.1)	60 (33.5)	98 (54.7)	3.41	0.74
Average Mean = 3.28, SD = 0.78						

Source: Field Survey 2026; Freq. = Frequency KEY: VHL = Very High Level, HL = High Level, LL = Low Level, VLL = Very Low Level. Decision Rule: Mean of 1.00-1.74 = Very Low Level; 1.75-2.49 = Low Level; 2.50-3.24 = High Level; 3.25-4.00 = Very High Level.



Table 1 presents the level of library use among SS3 students in selected private secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. The table is divided into two major dimensions, namely purpose of library use and types of materials used, with an overall mean of 3.28 and standard deviation of 0.78. Based on the decision rule, this indicates a very high level of library use among the respondents. Under the purpose of library use, the students use the library mainly to search for past questions and to carry out research based on the assignment given in class with SD = 0.78. in the aspect of the types of resources use the result shows that electronic resources like computer, e-books, and internet were consulted in the library with SD = 0.87. This shows that the students use the library at a very high level for academic purposes. This suggests that the library plays an important role in helping students prepare for major examinations such as WAEC, NECO, and JAMB.

Research Question Two: What is the level of digital literacy skills among SS3 students of selected private secondary schools in River State?

Table 2: Level of digital literacy

Level of digital literacy	VLL Freq. (%)	LL Freq. (%)	HL Freq. (%)	VHL Freq. (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)
Information Searching Skills(Mean = 3.12, SD = 0.84						
I can effectively use search engines (e.g., Google, Bing) to find academic information to a...	6 (3.4)	25 (14.0)	65 (36.3)	83 (46.4)	3.26	0.82
I know how to use keywords and search terms to get relevant results to a...	5 (2.8)	32 (17.9)	67 (37.4)	75 (41.9)	3.18	0.82
I can navigate educational websites and online learning platforms to a...	7 (3.9)	27 (15.1)	69 (38.5)	76 (42.5)	3.20	0.84
I can use online databases and digital libraries for my academic work to a..	13 (7.3)	45 (25.1)	80 (44.7)	41 (22.9)	2.83	0.86
I can use advanced search techniques (e.g., quotation marks, filters) to refine my searches to a...	14 (7.8)	54 (30.2)	63 (35.2)	48 (26.8)	2.81	0.92
Information Evaluation Skills (Mean = 3.03, SD = 0.87)						
I can determine whether the information I find online is credible and reliable to a...	8 (4.5)	33 (18.4)	76 (42.5)	62 (34.6)	3.07	0.84
I can identify fake news, misinformation, and biased	10 (5.6)	33 (18.4)	74 (42.3)	62 (34.6)	3.05	0.87



Level of digital literacy	VLL Freq. (%)	LL Freq. (%)	HL Freq. (%)	VHL Freq. (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)
information on the internet to a...						
I verify information from multiple sources before using it for my assignments to a...	11(6.1)	40 (22.3)	69 (38.5)	59 (33.0)	2.98	0.90
I check the author, publication date, and website reputation before using online information to a...	4(2.2)	46(25.7)	60 (33.5)	69 (38.5)	3.08	0.85
I can differentiate between academic and non-academic sources to a...	9 (5.0)	41 (22.9)	75 (41.9)	54 (30.2)	2.97	0.88
Content Creation Skills (Mean = 3.15, SD = 0.83)						
I can create digital documents (e.g., Microsoft Word, PowerPoint) for my school projects to a..	5 (2.8)	22 (12.3)	80(44.7)	72 (40.2)	3.22	0.77
I can save, organize, and manage digital files on my device to a...	7 (2.9)	23 (12.8)	78 (43.6)	71 (39.7)	3.19	0.81
I can share information and collaborate with classmates using digital tools to a..	5 (2.8)	34 (19.0)	54 (30.2)	86 (48.0)	3.23	0.86
I know how to properly cite and reference online sources in my assignments to a...	6 (3.4)	52 (29.1)	68 (38.0)	53 (29.6)	2.94	0.85
ICT Proficiency(Mean = 3.09, SD = 0.87)						
I am comfortable using computers, smartphones, and other digital devices for learning to a...	5(2.8)	19(10.6)	65(36.3)	90(50.3)	3.34	0.78
I understand basic technological terms (e.g., URL, browser, hyperlink, search engine) to a...	12(6.7)	25(14.0)	74(41.3)	68(38.0)	3.11	0.89
I can troubleshoot basic technical problems (e.g., internet connectivity issues) to a...	19(10.6)	37(20.7)	78(43.6)	45(25.1)	2.83	0.93
Average Overall Mean					3.08	0.85

Source: Field Survey 2025; KEY: Freq. = Frequency, VHL = Very High Level, HL = High Level, LL = Low Level, VLL = Very Low Level. Decision Rule: Mean of 1.00-1.74 = Very Low Level; 1.75-2.49 = Low Level; 2.50-3.24 = High Level; 3.25-4.00 = Very High Level.



Table 2 presents the level of digital literacy skills among SS3 students in selected private secondary schools in Rivers State. The table covers four dimensions of digital literacy, namely information searching skills, information evaluation skills, content creation skills, and ICT proficiency. The overall mean of 3.08 with a standard deviation of 0.85 indicates that respondents possessed a high level of digital literacy skills based on the decision rule. Content creation skills under digital literacy skills had the highest mean score of 3.15 and Standard Deviation of 0.83. The respondents agreed that they can share information and

collaborate with classmates using digital tools (Mean=3.23, SD= 0.86) and they know how to properly cite and reference online sources in their assignments (Mean=2.94, SD=0.85). Information evaluation skills ranked the lowest with a mean of 3.03 and a standard deviation of 0.87. This implies that the student needs to improve on their evaluation skills, especially in determining whether information is credible or not.

Hypothesis 1: Influence of Digital literacy skills on library use among SS3 students in selected private secondary schools in Rivers State

Table 3

Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	p	Adj. R ²	F	df (residual)	p
Constant	20.211	2.055		9.837	0.000	0.364	26.438	4(174)	0.000
Information Searching Skills	0.048	0.245	0.024	0.195	0.845				
Information Evaluation Skills	0.705	0.265	0.361	2.660	0.009				
Content Creation Skills	-0.057	0.323	-0.022	-0.177	0.860				
ICT Proficiency	0.889	0.364	0.282	2.439	0.016				



Dependent Variable: library use

The result presented in Table 3 shows that the overall regression model was statistically significant, with Adj. $R^2 = 0.364$, $F(4, 174) = 26.438$, $p < 0.05$. This indicates that digital literacy skills jointly explained 36.4% of the variance in library use among SS3 students in the selected private secondary schools. On this basis, the null hypothesis was rejected. The finding therefore implies that digital literacy skills had a significant combined influence on library use among the students. At the individual predictor level, information evaluation skills had a significant positive influence on library use, with $B = 0.705$, $\beta = 0.361$, $t = 2.660$, $p = 0.009$. This means that students who were better able to assess the credibility, reliability, and relevance of information tended to use the library more. Similarly, ICT proficiency also had a statistically significant positive influence on library use, with $B = 0.889$, $\beta = 0.282$, $t = 2.439$, $p = 0.016$. This indicates that students who were more comfortable using computers, smartphones, and other digital devices for learning were more likely to use the library.

Discussion of the Findings

The first major finding revealed that SS3 students in the selected private secondary schools exhibited a very high level of library use. This indicates that the students made substantial use of the library for different academic purposes. Ladele et al (2022) found that in particular, the strongest reasons for library use were examination preparation, access to past questions and revision materials, and borrowing textbooks. The students also valued the library as a quiet and conducive environment for study. These results suggest that the school library remains highly relevant to students'

academic lives, especially as a support system for examinations, assignments, and focused study.

Similarly findings by Attah & Olayinka (2020) shows that, despite the increasing presence of digital learning tools, the school library continues to occupy an important place in the academic routines of senior secondary school students. The very high use of the library for examinations and revision suggests that students see the library primarily as a place for academic improvement and immediate task fulfilment. At the same time, the finding that students also use the quiet environment of the library extensively indicates that the library is valued not only for its resources but also for the learning atmosphere it provides. This reinforces the idea that the school library serves both informational and environmental functions within the school system. The results also show that some aspects of library use were relatively weaker. For example, research-related use of the library for assignments and group work was lower than examination-related use. Similarly, Oyewusi & Oyeboade (2009) the use of electronic resources within the library and consultation with librarians, though positive, were less pronounced than the use of print materials and the library environment. This implies that students may still associate the library more strongly with traditional academic support than with research, digital engagement, or librarian-guided information seeking. Based on the findings reported by Tinmaz et al. (2022), such a pattern suggests that while the library is well used, its full range of services may not yet be exploited to the same degree.



The second major finding showed that SS3 students possessed a high level of digital literacy skills. Across the four dimensions measured, the students performed strongly in information searching skills, information evaluation skills, content creation skills, and ICT proficiency. They were particularly strong in using search engines, navigating online learning platforms, sharing information and collaborating using digital tools, and using digital devices such as computers and smartphones for learning. This indicates that the students had a generally sound digital foundation for engaging with information and technology in academic contexts.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study found that digital literacy skills contribute to library use among SS3 students in selected private secondary schools in Rivers State. The study confirms that the traditional perception of the library as merely a physical space for reading books is rapidly eroding with need to improve on the technological advancement of the library. In the digital era, the relevance and effectiveness of the library use depend on its ability to integrate digital resources to support students in developing the competencies required to use the library effectively and efficiently.

Recommendations

1. The secondary schools administration should integrate structured digital literacy training into their curriculum
2. Private secondary school management should provide adequate ICT infrastructure to enable adequate internet access.
3. Librarians in the private secondary schools should organize regular orientation and training programs for students to guide

them on how to use the resources in the library.

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