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The Effect of Information Literacy on Students' Information Overload in the Use of Digital Academic References

Dea Olivia & Desriyeni
Padang State University, Indonesia
desriyeni@fbs.unp.ac.id; deaolivia2004@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study is motivated by the increasing volume of digital information that may lead to information overload among students, particularly when using digital academic references. The main problem addressed in this research is students' limited ability to select, evaluate, and effectively use information amid the abundance of available sources. This study aims to analyze the effect of information literacy on students' information overload in the use of digital academic references. A quantitative approach with a descriptive survey design was employed. The population consisted of students from the Library and Information Science Program at Universitas Negeri Padang from the 2023–2025 cohorts, with a total sample of 73 respondents selected using proportionate stratified random sampling. Data were collected through questionnaires and preliminary interviews and analyzed using descriptive statistics and simple linear regression. The findings indicate that information literacy has a significant effect on information overload, with a significance value of $p < .001$ and a t-value of 5.611. The coefficient of determination of 30.7% shows that information literacy contributes to students' ability to manage information overload. These findings suggest that higher levels of information literacy enhance students' capacity to select, evaluate, and use

digital academic references effectively, thereby minimizing the risk of information overload. This study contributes to the literature on information literacy and digital academic behavior by providing empirical evidence of the role of information literacy in managing excessive information exposure. Practically, the findings imply the need to strengthen information literacy programs in higher education to improve students' critical and effective use of digital academic references.

Keywords: Information Literacy; Information Overload; Digital Academic References; Library And Information Science Students; Higher Education

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of information and communication technology has significantly transformed the way individuals access, manage, and utilize information in contemporary society. Digital transformation driven by the expansion of internet infrastructure and data-based systems has created a highly dynamic and complex information environment (Sinulingga & Nasution, 2024). Information is now available in vast quantities and can be accessed instantly without spatial and temporal limitations, thereby reshaping how individuals interact with knowledge resources (Fiannisa & Nasution, 2023). In this context, information is no longer merely perceived as raw data but as a strategic resource that supports academic activities and decision-making processes (Muhajir, 2024). The abundance of information also implies that individuals must possess adequate competencies to understand and utilize information effectively (Maulida et al., 2024). The ease of access to information provides significant opportunities for students to obtain diverse academic references. Students can utilize various digital platforms to support their learning activities and research processes (Haliq & Hamsa, 2021). However, this condition also introduces new challenges related to the increasing complexity of searching and selecting relevant information (Hazan et al., 2025). When individuals are exposed to an excessive amount of information, the ability to manage and process information becomes critically important (Arnold et al., 2023). The imbalance between the volume of available information and individuals' cognitive processing capacity can lead to the phenomenon of information overload (Bawden & Robinson, 2009). The phenomenon of information overload has become increasingly evident in the digital era characterized by exponential growth in global data production. The volume of digital data continues to expand

significantly each year, reflecting an ongoing information explosion that is difficult to control (Vailsher, 2025). This condition requires individuals to cope with massive flows of information within a limited timeframe (Shahrzadi et al., 2024). Furthermore, the development of artificial intelligence technologies has accelerated information dissemination through automated search and recommendation systems (Setyawan et al., 2025). Although these technologies enhance efficiency, they also increase the risk of excessive information exposure (Fitriani & Arfini, 2025).

Therefore, the ability to critically evaluate information has become increasingly essential in navigating digital information environments (Madani et al., 2025). In higher education settings, students represent a group that is highly dependent on digital information for academic purposes. Digital academic references have become the primary sources for completing coursework and producing scholarly writing (Rosida & Faturrahman, 2025). The high level of internet penetration in Indonesia indicates that students have extensive access to digital information resources (Nugraha, 2025). This condition encourages students to rely heavily on academic databases and electronic journals in their learning processes (Miranda & Marlini, 2025). However, not all students are capable of utilizing these resources effectively (Cahyaningtyas & Zakiah, 2025). Students frequently encounter difficulties in filtering and evaluating information obtained from various digital sources. The abundance of available information sources often leads to confusion in determining which information is relevant (Arnold et al., 2023). In addition, excessive exposure to digital content contributes to phenomena such as doomscrolling, which negatively affects students' learning focus (Faunesya & Ardoni, 2025). This condition indicates that students are not only overwhelmed by the quantity of information but also challenged in managing it effectively (Nuralmi et al., 2023). As a consequence, students experience increased cognitive fatigue due to excessive information processing demands (Wang et al., 2025). Information overload has significant implications for students' learning processes. Students who experience information overload tend to have difficulties in making academic decisions (Saputri & Utami, 2023). This condition also leads to decreased concentration during learning activities (Narti, 2025). Moreover, information overload can result in stress and mental fatigue that negatively affect academic performance (Rahmah et al., 2025).

The excessive amount of information also contributes to difficulties in prioritizing relevant information sources (Khusnah & Roosdhani, 2025). Therefore, it is necessary to

develop competencies that enable students to manage information effectively. Information literacy is one of the essential competencies that can help students cope with the challenges of information overload. Information literacy includes the ability to identify information needs and search for relevant information efficiently (Mackey & Jacobson, 2011). It also involves the ability to evaluate the quality and credibility of information sources (Jacobson & Mackey, 2013). Furthermore, information literacy requires critical thinking skills to interpret information within its context (Mahardhini et al., 2021). It also emphasizes the ethical use of information in academic activities (Suroya, 2021). In higher education, information literacy plays a crucial role in enhancing the quality of students' learning outcomes. Students with higher levels of information literacy tend to achieve better academic performance (Banik & Kumar, 2019). Information literacy also supports critical thinking and problem-solving abilities in academic contexts (Tarbiyati & Riady, 2025). In addition, it helps students manage information effectively, thereby reducing the risk of experiencing information overload (Sakinah et al., 2021). This competency also contributes to the development of independent learning among students (Fitriani & Arfini, 2025). Therefore, information literacy has become an essential skill in the digital era (Ningsih & Sayekti, 2023). It also enables students to assess the relevance and accuracy of information critically (Wahyuni et al., 2025). Despite the growing number of studies on information literacy and information overload, most research has examined these concepts separately. Previous studies have primarily focused on the relationship between information literacy and the use of digital information resources (Sholikhah et al., 2024). Other studies have emphasized the impact of information overload on students' academic behavior (Anggraini & Erlianti, 2025). Additionally, some studies have explored the relationship between information overload and academic procrastination (Saputri & Utami, 2023). These findings indicate that the integration of these two variables remains limited in empirical research. The research gap in this study lies in the limited number of studies that specifically examine the influence of information literacy on information overload in the context of digital academic reference utilization. Previous studies also tend to focus on specific student groups, which limits the generalizability of their findings. Therefore, there is a need for research that comprehensively examines the relationship between information literacy and information overload. This study offers a novel contribution (novelty) by integrating information literacy and information overload within a unified conceptual framework. The study adopts the metaliteracy model to explain information literacy

(Jacobson & Mackey, 2013). It also applies information overload theory to analyze the challenges associated with excessive information (Bawden & Robinson, 2009). This approach provides a new perspective in understanding the relationship between these two variables. Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the influence of information literacy on students' information overload in the utilization of digital academic references. The study is expected to contribute theoretically to the development of library and information science. It is also expected to provide practical contributions in improving students' information literacy skills in higher education contexts.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative research approach with a descriptive design to examine the effect of information literacy on students' information overload in utilizing digital academic references. The quantitative approach was selected because it allows for objective measurement of variables and statistical testing of relationships between them, who states that quantitative research is suitable for testing hypotheses using numerical data. The research design used in this study is a survey design, which is appropriate for collecting data from a specific population to analyze patterns, relationships, and influences among variables. Compared to previous studies that often examined either information literacy or information overload separately, this study integrates both variables within a single analytical framework using a cross-sectional survey design, thus providing a more comprehensive analysis.

The population of this study consisted of students from the Library and Information Science Study Program at Universitas Negeri Padang, specifically cohorts of 2023, 2024, and 2025. The sampling technique applied was proportionate stratified random sampling to ensure that each cohort was proportionally represented. This technique is supported by Sugiyono (2022), who explains that probability sampling techniques provide equal opportunities for each member of the population to be selected, thereby increasing the representativeness of the sample. Based on the Slovin formula, the total sample size was determined to be 73 respondents.

Data were collected using structured questionnaires distributed online via WhatsApp, complemented by preliminary interviews to support initial data understanding. The questionnaire items were developed based on indicators of information literacy (metaliteracy) and information overload. Instrument validity was tested using validity tests,

while reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha to ensure consistency of the instrument. Similar questionnaire-based approaches have been widely used in prior studies examining information literacy and digital information behavior, demonstrating their effectiveness in capturing students' perceptions and experiences.

Data analysis was conducted using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize respondent characteristics and variable distributions, while inferential analysis, specifically simple linear regression, was applied to test the hypothesis regarding the effect of information literacy on information overload. The analysis was performed using SPSS software to ensure accuracy and efficiency in statistical computation. This approach aligns with standard quantitative data analysis procedures for examining causal relationships between variables.

RESULTS

The data for this study were obtained by distributing questionnaires to 73 respondents from a total population of 264 students registered as active students in the Library and Information Science Study Program at Padang State University. Data collection was conducted using proportionate stratified random sampling.

1. Distribution of Respondents by Academic and by gender

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents by Academic

No.	Academic Year	Frequency	Persentage
1	2023	21	28,8%
2	2024	23	31,5%
3	2025	29	39,7%
	Total	73	100%

Source: Compiled by the researcher (2026)

Based on Table 10, the majority of questionnaires were completed by respondents who entered in 2025, with 29 respondents (39.7%). Respondents from the year 2024 numbered 23 (31.5%), and respondents from 2023 numbered 21 (28.8%).

Table 2. distribution of respondents by gender

No	Gender	Frequency	Persentage
1	Laki-laki	14	19,2%
2	Perempuan	59	80,8%
	Total	73	100%

Source: Compiled by the researcher (2026)

Based on Table 11, the distribution of respondents by gender shows that out of 73 respondents, 14 respondents (19.2%) are male students, while 59 respondents (80.8%) are female students.

2. Validity and Reliability Test of the Research Instrument

The validity test is conducted to determine the ability of the research instrument to measure what it is supposed to measure. This test also aims to ensure that each statement in the questionnaire accurately represents the research variable. In this study, the instrument validity test was conducted using the product-moment correlation technique.

Table 3. Validity Test

Item	Pearson Correlation	R table	Description
P1	0,424	0,361	Valid
P2	0,538	0,361	Valid
P3	0,528	0,361	Valid
P4	0,370	0,361	Valid
P5	0,528	0,361	Valid
P6	0,610	0,361	Valid
P7	0,502	0,361	Valid
P8	0,623	0,361	Valid
P9	0,618	0,361	Valid
P10	0,425	0,361	Valid
P11	0,576	0,361	Valid
P12	0,586	0,361	Valid
P13	0,688	0,361	Valid
P14	0,563	0,361	Valid
P15	0,556	0,361	Valid
P16	0,757	0,361	Valid
P17	0,766	0,361	Valid
P18	0,534	0,361	Valid
P19	0,386	0,361	Valid
P20	0,484	0,361	Valid
P21	0,577	0,361	Valid
P22	0,490	0,361	Valid
P23	0,383	0,361	Valid
P24	0,798	0,361	Valid
P25	0,703	0,361	Valid
P26	0,847	0,361	Valid
P27	0,644	0,361	Valid
P28	0,696	0,361	Valid

Item	Pearson Correlation	R table	Description
P29	0,670	0,361	Valid
P30	0,778	0,361	Valid

Source: Compiled by the researcher (2026)

The validity of the instrument was tested by analyzing the relationship between variable X and variable Y using the correlation technique, with a significance level of 0.05. The number of respondents in this study was 73, which meets the minimum sample requirement for instrument testing, i.e., at least 30 respondents. The r-table value was determined based on statistical distribution with degrees of freedom (df) = N - 2, resulting in df = 28. Based on a 5% significance level (0.05), the r-table value used was 0.361. An item statement is considered valid if r-count > r-table; items with r-count < r-table are considered invalid and are not used in data collection. The questionnaire validity test in this study was assisted by SPSS 31 for Windows to obtain r-count.

Table 4. Reliability Test

Variabel	Nilai Cronbach's Alpha	Description
Information literacy	0,881	Reliabel
Information Overload	0,852	Reliabel

Source: Compiled by the researcher (2026)

According to the Cronbach's Alpha formula above, if the Cronbach's Alpha value is greater than 0.60, the research instrument is considered reliable because it has sufficient internal consistency to collect research data.

3. Normality Test

The normality test was conducted to determine whether the residual data were normally distributed. This test used the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test method with the assistance of SPSS version 31 software. The test results are presented in the table above.

Table 5. Reliability Test

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test		
		Unstandardized Residual
N		73
Normal Parameters[a,b]	Mean	.0000000
	Std. Deviation	4.54651455
Most Extreme	Absolute	.088

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test			
			Unstandardized Residual
Differences	Positive		.071
	Negative		-.088
Test Statistic			.088
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)[c]			.200[d]
Monte Carlo Sig. (2-tailed)[e]	Sig.		.169
	99% Confidence Interval	Lower Bound	.160
		Upper Bound	.179
a. Test distribution is Normal.			
b. Calculated from data.			
c. Lilliefors Significance Correction.			
d. This is a lower bound of the true significance.			
e. Lilliefors' method based on 10000 Monte Carlo samples with starting seed 299883525.			

Source: Compiled by the researcher (2026)

Based on the results of the normality test using the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test, the Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value obtained was 0.200. This value is greater than the significance level of 0.05, indicating that the residual data in this regression model are normally distributed. In addition, the residual mean value of 0.0000000 and the standard deviation of 4.54651455 indicate that the distribution of residual data does not significantly deviate from normality. Therefore, it can be concluded that the regression model is normally distributed and appropriate for further analysis.

5. Linearity Test

The linearity test was conducted to ensure that the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable is linear. The basis for decision-making is as follows: if the significance value of linearity is < 0.05, then there is a linear relationship between the independent and dependent variables. If the significance value of deviation from linearity is > 0.05, then there is no deviation from linearity. The results of the linearity test in this study are shown above.

Table 6. Linearity Test

ANOVA Table							
			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Information Overload * Literasi Informasi	Between Groups	(Combined)	832.440	27	30.831	1.822	.037
		Linearity	105.593	1	105.593	6.240	.016
		Deviation from Linearity	726.847	26	27.956	1.652	.068
	Within Groups		761.450	45	16.921		
	Total		1593.890	72			

Source: Compiled by the researcher (2026)

Based on the significance value (Sig.) from the output, the Deviation from Linearity Sig value is 0.068, which is greater than 0.05. Thus, it can be concluded that there is a linear relationship between variables, and the model used in this study is appropriate to proceed to regression analysis or other statistical tests.

6. Simple Linear Regression Test

The simple linear regression test was used to examine the effect of one independent variable (information literacy) on one dependent variable (information overload). The requirements for this test include valid and reliable data, normally distributed data, and a linear relationship between variables. The basis for decision-making is as follows: if the significance value is > 0.05, then the independent variable (information literacy) does not affect the dependent variable (information overload), meaning H0 is accepted and H1 is rejected. Conversely, if the significance value is < 0.05, then the independent variable affects the dependent variable, meaning H1 is accepted and H0 is rejected.

Table 7. Simple Linear Regression Test

ANOVA[a]						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	105.593	1	105.593	31.484	<,001[b]
	Residual	238.128	71	3.354		
	Total	343.721	72			

a. Dependent Variable: Information Overload

b. Predictors: (Constant), Literasi Informasi

Source: Compiled by the researcher (2026)

Based on the regression test results, the calculated F value is 31.484 with a significance level of < 0.001. Since the significance value is less than 0.05, H1 is accepted

and H0 is rejected. Thus, it can be concluded that the information literacy variable (X) has a significant effect on the information overload variable (Y). Furthermore, based on the t-test results, the significance value is 0.000, which is less than 0.05, and the calculated t value is 5.611, which is greater than the t-table value of 1.993. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a significant effect of information literacy on students' information overload in utilizing digital academic references. This means that H1 is accepted and H0 is rejected.

7. Coefficient of Determination Test

The coefficient of determination test was conducted to determine the extent to which the independent variable (X) explains the dependent variable (Y). In this study, it measures how much influence information literacy (X) has on information overload (Y).

Table 8. Coefficient of Determination Test

Model Summary				
Model	**R**	**R Square**	**Adjusted R Square**	**Std. Error of the Estimate**
1	.554[a]	.307	.297	1.831
a. Predictors: (Constant), Literasi Informasi				

Source: Compiled by the researcher (2026)

Based on the test results, the correlation coefficient (R) is 0.554, and the coefficient of determination (R Square) is 0.307. This indicates that the influence of the independent variable (information literacy) on the dependent variable (information overload) is 30.7%, while the remaining 69.3% is influenced by other factors not examined in this study. Therefore, the results show that information literacy contributes to influencing students' information overload in utilizing digital academic references.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that information literacy has a significant effect on students' information overload in the use of digital academic references. The statistical results show that the significance value is less than 0.05 (<0.001), with a calculated t-value (5.611) greater than the t-table value (1.993), confirming that the proposed hypothesis (H1) is accepted. This result demonstrates that information literacy plays a crucial role in influencing students' ability to manage excessive information. Furthermore, the coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.307 indicates that information literacy contributes 30.7% to explaining the variance in information overload, while the remaining 69.3% is influenced by other factors not examined in this study. These findings suggest that higher levels of information literacy enable students to better identify, evaluate, and utilize relevant

information, thereby reducing the risk of experiencing information overload in academic activities.

In relation to the research objectives, these results confirm that students who possess strong information literacy skills are more capable of handling large volumes of digital academic information. This aligns with the theoretical framework of metaliteracy proposed by Mackey and Jacobson, which emphasizes critical, reflective, and participatory competencies in interacting with information. Students with adequate literacy skills are not only able to access information efficiently but also evaluate its credibility and relevance, which ultimately minimizes cognitive overload. Conversely, students with lower levels of information literacy tend to experience confusion, difficulty in selecting relevant sources, and increased cognitive burden when dealing with abundant academic references.

When compared with previous studies, the findings of this research are consistent with Sakinah et al. (2021), who found that information literacy significantly influences the use of digital resources among students. Similarly, Fitriani and Arfini (2025) emphasize that information literacy helps individuals filter and manage information effectively, thereby reducing the risk of information overload. In contrast, research by Anggraini and Erlianti (2025) focuses on the impact of information overload on fulfilling information needs, showing that excessive information can hinder students' academic performance. While previous studies have examined these variables separately, this study provides a more integrated perspective by directly analyzing the influence of information literacy on information overload within the context of digital academic references. This highlights the contribution of this study in bridging the gap between the two concepts.

The implications of these findings are both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, this study strengthens the relationship between metaliteracy theory and information overload theory by demonstrating that information literacy is a key factor in managing cognitive challenges arising from excessive information. It contributes to the development of knowledge in library and information science, particularly in understanding students' information behavior in digital environments. Practically, the findings suggest that higher education institutions should prioritize the development of information literacy programs, such as training on evaluating academic sources, using databases effectively, and managing digital information. For students, improving information literacy skills can enhance academic performance by reducing confusion, cognitive fatigue, and delays in completing

academic tasks. For librarians and educators, the results can serve as a basis for designing more effective information literacy instruction tailored to students' needs.

Despite these contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the sample size is relatively small, consisting of only 73 respondents from a single study program, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Second, this study focuses solely on one independent variable, namely information literacy, while other potential factors influencing information overload, such as digital skills, academic pressure, or information-seeking behavior, were not examined. Third, the use of self-reported questionnaire data may introduce response bias, as participants' answers may not fully reflect their actual behavior. Therefore, future research is recommended to include a larger and more diverse sample, incorporate additional variables, and consider mixed-method approaches to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between information literacy and information overload.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that information literacy has a significant effect on students' information overload in the use of digital academic references. The statistical results confirm that information literacy contributes meaningfully to reducing information overload, as indicated by a significant value of <0.001 and a contribution of 30.7% (R^2 = 0.307). These findings answer the research objective by demonstrating that students with higher levels of information literacy are better able to identify, evaluate, and manage relevant information, thereby minimizing cognitive burden and confusion when dealing with large volumes of digital academic resources. Conversely, limited information literacy increases the likelihood of experiencing information overload, which can negatively affect academic performance and efficiency.

From a scientific perspective, this study contributes to the existing literature by integrating metaliteracy theory and information overload theory within a single analytical framework, thereby providing empirical evidence of the relationship between these two constructs in the context of digital academic reference use. Methodologically, the study applies a quantitative survey design with proportionate stratified random sampling, offering a structured approach to examining students' information behavior. Practically, the findings highlight the importance of strengthening information literacy competencies among

students through academic training and institutional support, as a strategy to mitigate the negative effects of information overload in higher education environments.

Based on the identified limitations, future research is recommended to expand the scope by involving larger and more diverse samples across different institutions and disciplines. Further studies should also consider additional variables, such as digital literacy, information-seeking behavior, and academic workload, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of factors influencing information overload. Additionally, the use of mixed-method approaches is suggested to capture deeper insights into students' experiences and strategies in managing information in digital academic contexts.

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