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Digital Literacy Level and Information Source Evaluation Ability: A Case Study of Library and Information Science Students at Padang State University

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Abstract

This study is motivated by the gap between the high intensity of digital technology use and the relatively limited critical evaluation skills of information sources among university students. Although students are often considered digital natives, they may still experience difficulties in assessing the credibility, accuracy, and reliability of information, particularly among students in the Library and Information Science Program at Universitas Negeri Padang. This study aims to describe students' levels of digital literacy, their ability to evaluate information sources, and the relationship between these two aspects. A quantitative approach with a descriptive method was employed. The population consisted of 364 active students from the 2022–2025 cohorts, from which 85 respondents were selected using stratified random sampling based on the Slovin formula. Data were collected through a questionnaire consisting of 40 statements and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings indicate that students' digital literacy was categorized as good, with a mean score of 4.00; information synthesis obtained the highest score, whereas information searching skills obtained the lowest score. Students' ability to evaluate information sources was also categorized as good, with a mean score of 4.07;

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relevance was the highest-rated indicator, while authority was the lowest. These findings suggest that students generally demonstrate adequate digital literacy and information evaluation skills, although weaknesses remain in information searching techniques and in assessing the authority and purpose of sources. This study contributes to the literature on digital literacy and information literacy by providing empirical insight into the competencies of prospective information professionals. Practically, the findings imply the need to strengthen critical literacy education, develop curricula focused on information evaluation, and provide continuous training to enhance students' capacity to assess digital information effectively.

Keywords: Digital Literacy; Information Source Evaluation; Information Literacy; Library and Information Science Students; Critical Literacy

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of information and communication technology has fundamentally transformed the landscape of information production, distribution, and consumption. The contemporary information ecosystem is characterized by an unprecedented abundance of data, borderless access, and the active participation of individuals as both producers and consumers of information. In this context, digital literacy has evolved from a supplementary skill into a fundamental competency that determines individuals' ability to meaningfully engage in a knowledge-based society (Vitriyatno et al., 2022). However, increased access to digital technologies does not necessarily correlate with improved critical thinking skills, particularly in evaluating information, thus creating a paradox between technical proficiency and critical understanding (Amri et al., 2024).

Globally, the phenomenon of information overload and the proliferation of misinformation have become pressing challenges in the digital era. Individuals are required not only to access information but also to critically assess its credibility, relevance, and accuracy (Ririen, 2022). In Indonesia, this issue is further complicated by the rapid growth of internet users, which is not proportionally matched by the quality of digital literacy, particularly in critical comprehension and digital safety. University students, who are expected to serve as agents of literacy, remain vulnerable to misleading and unreliable information.

In particular, students of Library and Information Science programs are expected to possess higher competencies in digital literacy and information evaluation, as they are

being prepared to become information professionals and mediators in society (Rodin & Nurrizqi, 2020). However, empirical evidence indicates a significant gap between technical skills in using digital technologies and the ability to critically evaluate information sources. Students often prioritize accessibility and speed over verification, leading to potential reliance on unverified or low-quality information.

This study adopts the position that digital literacy is a multidimensional construct encompassing not only technical skills but also critical understanding and evaluative competencies. This perspective aligns with digital literacy theories that emphasize the integration of technical and critical thinking skills in managing digital information (Ririen, 2022). Furthermore, the Individual Competence Framework (ICF) conceptualizes digital literacy as consisting of technical, cognitive, and social dimensions (Mardiawati et al., 2023). Constructivist theory also supports this view by emphasizing that knowledge is actively constructed through interaction with information, making evaluative ability a core component of learning (Marni, 2023).

Previous studies have examined the relationship between digital literacy and information-seeking behavior; however, most focus primarily on technical skills or usage patterns (Saputri & Manggalani, 2023). Other findings suggest that high technical proficiency does not necessarily translate into strong information literacy skills (Yoliadi, 2022). Additionally, research indicates that the critical understanding dimension of digital literacy tends to be lower than technical skills among students (Mardiawati et al., 2023). Further studies highlight the role of literacy as a cognitive filter against misinformation (Oktapiyadi et al., 2024) and its contribution to improving academic work quality (Marni, 2023).

Despite these contributions, a significant research gap remains. Existing studies have not sufficiently explored the relationship between multidimensional digital literacy and the ability to evaluate information sources within authentic academic contexts, particularly among Library and Information Science students as future information professionals (Irmawarni, 2022). Moreover, prior research often treats digital literacy and information evaluation as separate constructs, resulting in a lack of integrated understanding of their interrelationship.

Addressing this gap, the present study offers a novelty in the form of an integrative approach that examines digital literacy as a multidimensional construct and its relationship with information source evaluation based on the CRAAP Test criteria within the context of

Library and Information Science students. This study not only assesses digital literacy levels but also directly links them to evaluative competencies, which are essential in professional information practices. Therefore, it contributes to advancing digital literacy research from a more evaluative and applied perspective.

Furthermore, this study is grounded in a synthesis of theoretical frameworks, including digital literacy theory, critical literacy, constructivism, and source criticism theory, which collectively provide a robust conceptual foundation for understanding the relationship between digital literacy and information evaluation (Amri et al., 2024; Irmawarni, 2022; Rodin & Nurrizqi, 2020). This integrated approach enables a more comprehensive analysis of students' competencies in navigating complex digital information environments.

Based on this background, the study focuses on describing the level of digital literacy, the ability to evaluate information sources, and the relationship between these variables among students of the Library and Information Science Program at Universitas Negeri Padang. The objective is to provide empirical insights into students' competencies in digital literacy and information evaluation, as well as to inform the development of more effective instructional strategies for enhancing the quality of graduates in the field of library and information science.

METHODS

This study employs a quantitative research approach with the aim of objectively measuring the level of digital literacy and the ability to evaluate information sources among students. Quantitative research is appropriate because it allows for numerical measurement and statistical analysis of variables to produce generalizable findings (Creswell, 2014). This approach is selected to provide a clear and measurable description of students' competencies based on standardized instruments. This study employs a quantitative approach with a descriptive research design aimed at systematically describing the level of digital literacy and the ability to evaluate information sources among students of the Library and Information Science Program at Universitas Negeri Padang. The quantitative approach is selected to enable objective measurement of variables through numerical data analyzed statistically. Philosophically, this study is grounded in a positivist paradigm, which assumes that reality is observable, measurable, and empirically verifiable. The research

method used is a survey with a cross-sectional design, where data are collected at a single point in time to capture the current condition of the variables.

The research design focuses on two main variables: digital literacy as the independent variable and information source evaluation ability as the dependent variable. Digital literacy is measured based on the *Individual Competence Framework* (ICF), which includes three key indicators: information searching skills, content evaluation, and information synthesis. Meanwhile, the ability to evaluate information sources is operationalized using the *CRAAP Test* criteria, consisting of five indicators: currency, relevance, authority, accuracy, and purpose. Each indicator is translated into structured questionnaire items to ensure alignment between theoretical constructs and empirical measurement. The population of this study consists of all active students of the Library and Information Science Program at Universitas Negeri Padang from the 2022–2025 cohorts, totaling 364 individuals. The sampling technique used is stratified random sampling, with strata based on student cohorts to ensure proportional representation. The sample size is determined using the Slovin formula with a margin of error of 10%, resulting in a minimum of 79 respondents. To anticipate incomplete responses, the sample size is increased to 85 respondents. This technique is chosen to ensure representativeness and reduce sampling bias.

The primary research instrument is a structured questionnaire consisting of 40 items measured using a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire is developed based on established theoretical indicators. In addition to questionnaires, data collection is supported by observation, literature review, and documentation to provide contextual depth. Prior to data collection, the instrument undergoes validity and reliability testing. Validity is tested using Pearson's Product Moment correlation with an r-table value of 0.312, and all items are found to be valid. Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha yields coefficients of 0.763 for digital literacy and 0.866 for information evaluation, indicating good internal consistency. The data collection procedure is conducted in stages, beginning with instrument development and pilot testing, followed by questionnaire distribution both online via Google Forms and offline in printed form. This dual approach is implemented to maximize response rates and accessibility. Data collection is conducted over a three-week period, accompanied by periodic reminders to respondents. The collected data are then screened for completeness and consistency before analysis.

Data analysis is carried out through several stages, including data checking, tabulation, descriptive statistical analysis, and conclusion drawing. Descriptive analysis is used to calculate mean scores, frequency distributions, and percentages for each indicator. The results are interpreted using interval scales to categorize the levels of digital literacy and information source evaluation ability. This approach allows for a comprehensive depiction of students' competency profiles across all indicators. This study was conducted in 2026 over several months, covering planning, data collection, analysis, and reporting stages. Through a systematic and structured methodological process, the study is expected to produce valid and reliable findings that provide an empirical overview of students' digital literacy and information evaluation competencies.

RESULTS

Analysis Requirement Tests

a. Validity Test

The validity test was conducted to measure the extent to which the research instrument (questionnaire) is capable of accurately and precisely measuring what it is intended to measure. In this study, the validity test was applied to 40 statement items divided into two variables: Variable X (Digital Literacy) and Variable Y (Information Source Evaluation). The validity test employed the Pearson Product Moment correlation technique by comparing the calculated r-value (r-count) of each item with the r-table value at a significance level of 5%. An item is considered valid if the r-count value is greater than the r-table value, indicating that the item has a significant correlation with the total score of the variable. The validity test was conducted on 40 respondents as a pilot sample before distributing the instrument to the full research sample . The first step in the validity test was calculating the correlation between each item score and the total variable score using the Pearson correlation formula. The r-table value for df = n−2 (40−2 = 38) at $\alpha = 0.05$ is 0.312. If the r-count value of an item exceeds 0.312, the item is considered valid and can be used for data collection. Conversely, if the r-count value is lower than the r-table value, the item is considered invalid and must be revised or removed. This validity testing ensures that each item accurately represents the intended construct, thereby enhancing data accuracy.

Table 1. Validity Test of the Research Instrument

Item	Pearson Correlation	r tabel	Desccription
P1	0,401	0,312	Valid
P2	0,407	0,312	Valid
P3	0,430	0,312	Valid
P4	0,426	0,312	Valid
P5	0,577	0,312	Valid
P6	0,477	0,312	Valid
P7	0,525	0,312	Valid
P8	0,398	0,312	Valid
P9	0,670	0,312	Valid
P10	0,345	0,312	Valid
P11	0,357	0,312	Valid
P12	0,590	0,312	Valid
P13	0,577	0,312	Valid
P14	0,527	0,312	Valid
P15	0,536	0,312	Valid
P16	0,320	0,312	Valid
P17	0,402	0,312	Valid
P18	0,427	0,312	Valid
P19	0,526	0,312	Valid
P20	0,417	0,312	Valid
P21	0,643	0,312	Valid
P22	0,441	0,312	Valid
P23	0,706	0,312	Valid
P24	0,536	0,312	Valid
P25	0,407	0,312	Valid
P26	0,550	0,312	Valid
P27	0,575	0,312	Valid
P28	0,619	0,312	Valid
P29	0,315	0,312	Valid
P30	0,486	0,312	Valid
P31	0,459	0,312	Valid
P32	0,487	0,312	Valid
P33	0,437	0,312	Valid
P34	0,603	0,312	Valid
P35	0,475	0,312	Valid
P36	0,438	0,312	Valid
P37	0,538	0,312	Valid
P38	0,571	0,312	Valid
P39	0,439	0,312	Valid
P40	0,391	0,312	Valid

The validity test was conducted using SPSS version 26 to facilitate correlation calculations and identify invalid items. The results showed that all 40 statement items were valid, as each item had an r-count value greater than the r-table value (0.312). Thus, all items were retained in the final research instrument. These valid items were distributed across both variables, ensuring that the instrument adequately represents all dimensions and indicators of the study variables

b. Reliability Test

The reliability test was conducted to measure the consistency and stability of the research instrument in measuring the same variable over time. This study used Cronbach's Alpha method to assess the internal consistency among items within each variable. A Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of at least 0.70 is considered acceptable, indicating that the instrument is reliable.

Table 3. Reliability Test

Variabel	Nilai cronbach's alpha	Description
Digital Literacy (X)	0,763	Reliabel
Information Source Evaluation (Y)	0,866	Reliabel

source: Compiled by the researcher (2026)

The reliability test was conducted on valid items, with separate calculations for Variable X (15 items) and Variable Y (25 items). The Cronbach's Alpha values are interpreted as follows: > 0.90 (excellent), 0.70–0.90 (good), 0.60–0.70 (acceptable), and < 0.60 (poor). The results showed that the Cronbach's Alpha value for Variable X was 0.763 and for Variable Y was 0.866, indicating that both variables have good reliability and are suitable for data collection

The findings indicate that the overall level of students' digital literacy falls into the "good" category, with a grand mean of 4.00. Among the indicators, information synthesis shows the highest mean score (4.07), followed by content evaluation (4.00) and information searching skills (3.93) as the lowest. This suggests that students are relatively more proficient in processing and integrating information than in performing technical search activities. Within the information searching dimension, the highest score is found in digital platform navigation (mean = 4.07), while the lowest is observed in the use of advanced search features (mean = 3.76). This indicates that although students are familiar with digital platforms, their ability to utilize more sophisticated search techniques remains limited. In the content evaluation dimension, the highest score is associated with awareness of source credibility (mean = 4.19), whereas the lowest is found in checking authors'

background (mean = 3.85). This reveals a gap between general awareness and deeper evaluative practices. In the information synthesis dimension, all indicators demonstrate high scores, with the highest in comparing information across sources (mean = 4.19), indicating strong integrative skills among students. For the information source evaluation variable (Y), the relevance indicator shows the highest mean (4.32, categorized as "strongly agree"), followed by currency and accuracy. In contrast, the authority indicator records the lowest mean (approximately 3.8), suggesting that evaluating source authority remains a relatively weaker aspect.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the level of digital literacy among students of the Library and Information Science Program at Padang State University is generally in the "agree" category, with a grand mean of 4.00. This result suggests that students possess a relatively good level of digital literacy, particularly in their ability to synthesize information and evaluate digital content. However, the lower score in information searching ability (3.93) highlights a gap in students' technical and strategic skills in locating relevant information. This finding aligns with the research objective of describing students' digital literacy levels and indicates that while students are capable of processing and evaluating information, their initial ability to search for accurate and reliable sources still requires improvement.

Similarly, the ability to evaluate information sources is also categorized as "agree," with a grand mean of 4.07. The highest score in the relevance criterion (4.22) indicates that students are proficient in determining whether information meets their needs. However, the relatively lower scores in authority (3.84) and purpose (3.99) suggest that students may not fully consider the credibility of authors or the intent behind the information. This implies that students tend to focus more on the content itself rather than critically examining the background and reliability of the source. These results reflect the importance of strengthening critical evaluation skills as part of digital literacy competencies.

When compared with previous studies, the findings of this research are consistent with Saputri and Manggalani (2023), who found that digital literacy influences information behavior but does not always result in strong critical evaluation skills. Similarly, Yoliadi (2022) reported that students who are technically proficient in using digital resources do not necessarily demonstrate high levels of information literacy. Furthermore, Mardiawati et

al. (2023) identified an imbalance among digital literacy dimensions, where technical skills are relatively high, but critical understanding remains moderate. The present study supports these findings by showing that although students demonstrate good overall digital literacy, weaknesses still exist in specific dimensions, particularly in information searching and evaluating authority.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings are in line with the digital literacy framework proposed by Gilster (1997), which emphasizes that digital literacy is not limited to technical skills but also involves critical thinking and evaluation. In addition, the Individual Competence Framework by Livingstone and Helsper (2010) highlights that digital literacy consists of technical skills, critical understanding, and communicative abilities. The results of this study confirm that students' critical understanding, particularly in evaluating authority and purpose, has not yet reached an optimal level. Moreover, the application of the CRAAP Test criteria in this study demonstrates that source evaluation requires a comprehensive assessment of relevance, currency, accuracy, authority, and purpose, which are essential components of critical literacy (Hjørland, 2012).

The implications of this study are both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of digital literacy research by providing empirical evidence that digital literacy is a multidimensional construct with varying levels across its components. It also reinforces the importance of integrating critical evaluation skills into digital literacy frameworks. Practically, the findings suggest that higher education institutions, particularly programs in library and information science, need to strengthen curriculum design and learning strategies that focus on improving students' information searching skills and critical evaluation of sources. This can be achieved through training programs, workshops, or the integration of information literacy modules into coursework.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the sample size is limited to 85 respondents from a single study program, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to broader populations. Second, the use of self-reported questionnaires may introduce response bias, as participants may provide socially desirable answers. Third, this study employs a descriptive approach, which limits the ability to analyze causal relationships between variables. Future research is recommended to use larger and more diverse samples, as well as to apply inferential statistical methods to examine the relationships between digital literacy and information evaluation skills more comprehensively.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the digital literacy level of students in the Library and Information Science Program at Universitas Negeri Padang is categorized as good (grand mean = 4.00), with the highest performance observed in information synthesis (4.07), followed by content evaluation (4.00), and relatively weaker performance in information searching (3.93), particularly in the use of advanced search features and Boolean operators, while the ability to evaluate information sources is also categorized as good (grand mean = 4.07), with strongest performance in relevance (4.22) and currency (4.16), but comparatively lower in authority (3.84) and purpose (3.99), indicating an interconnected pattern in which limitations in technical skills are associated with less optimal depth of critical evaluation; these findings contribute to the advancement of knowledge in digital literacy and information literacy by reinforcing the notion that such competencies are multidimensional and do not develop linearly, while also enriching empirical understanding of the relationship between technical, cognitive, and evaluative skills among library science students; furthermore, it is recommended that future research adopt inferential or mixed-methods approaches, develop more comprehensive performance-based instruments, explore moderating variables such as digital self-efficacy, and expand the research scope across broader populations and contexts to achieve deeper insights and stronger generalizability.

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