



Research Article/ Library Science

Information Literacy Skills and the Use of Library Resources among Students in India

Debdas Mondal, PhD 

S.R. Fatepuria College, West Bengal, India

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between information literacy (IL) skills and library resource usage among students in public secondary schools in Paschim Bardhaman District, West Bengal, India. Using a descriptive survey method, data were collected from 400 students across grades 9 and 10 through a structured questionnaire. Findings reveal that the majority of students possess moderate IL skills, with notable weaknesses in evaluating sources and ethical information use. Textbooks were the most frequently

used library resources, while digital tools were underutilised due to limited access to ICT and a lack of awareness. A strong positive correlation ($r = 0.63$, $p < .01$) and significant regression result ($\beta = 0.63$, $p < .001$) indicate that students with higher IL skills engage more frequently with library resources. The study highlights the urgent need for improved digital infrastructure, professional development for school librarians, and integration of IL instruction into classroom teaching to enhance students' academic performance and lifelong learning capabilities.

KEYWORDS: Information literacy, library resources, digital tools, academic performance

INTRODUCTION

In developing regions, school libraries play a crucial role. In today's information-driven society, the ability to locate, evaluate, and effectively use information, known as information literacy, has become a critical skill for academic success and lifelong learning. School libraries play a vital role in nurturing these skills, especially in public secondary schools where students often rely on institutional resources for their educational development. In India, and particularly in the Paschim Bardhaman district of West Bengal, disparities in infrastructure, digital access, and educational support can significantly impact how students engage with library resources. This study investigates the correlation between

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Corresponding Author:

Dr. Debdas Mondal

research.libraryscience24@gmail.com

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students' information literacy skills and their use of library resources in public secondary schools within the district. By understanding the strengths and gaps in these areas, the research aims to provide actionable insights for educators, librarians, and policymakers to enhance information literacy education and optimise the use of school libraries for better academic outcomes.

Information literacy has become an essential skill for students in the modern information society, enabling them to identify, locate, evaluate, and effectively use information for academic and personal purposes. Several scholars have emphasised that the development of information literacy among school students is closely linked with the effective use of library resources. School libraries play a crucial role in supporting students' learning by providing access to books, reference materials, digital resources, and guidance in information searching.

Previous studies have highlighted the importance of integrating information literacy instruction within school curricula. Researchers have found that students who receive proper guidance in library use and information searching demonstrate better academic performance and improved critical thinking skills. The school library, therefore, serves not only as a repository of books but also as a learning resource centre where students develop the ability to access and evaluate information from multiple sources.

A number of studies conducted in India and other countries have examined students' patterns of library use and their level of information literacy. These studies reveal that while many students frequently visit school libraries for textbooks and examination preparation, their use of reference materials, journals, and digital resources remains limited. Factors such as lack of awareness, insufficient training in information searching, and limited

availability of modern library facilities often affect students' effective utilisation of library resources.

Research also suggests that teacher librarians and school educators play an important role in developing students' information literacy skills. Through orientation programmes, library instruction, and guided use of catalogues and digital tools, students can learn how to search for reliable information and use library collections more effectively. In addition, the integration of information and communication technologies in school libraries has significantly expanded students' access to information resources.

Despite the growing importance of information literacy, studies focusing specifically on secondary school students in districts such as Paschim Bardhaman in West Bengal remain limited. Therefore, the present study attempts to examine the level of information literacy skills among secondary school students and to analyse how they utilise available library resources. The review of literature thus provides a conceptual foundation for understanding the relationship between information literacy and library use, which forms the basis for the current investigation.

Information literacy has gained prominence as a foundational competence in the 21st-century educational landscape. According to the Association of College and Research Libraries ACRL (2000), information literacy encompasses the ability to recognise when information is needed and to locate, evaluate, and use it effectively. Numerous studies have highlighted the essential role of school libraries in developing these skills among students. For instance, Kuhlthau (2004) emphasised that guided inquiry and access to diverse resources in school libraries positively influence students' information-seeking behaviour. In the Indian context, research by Bhatt (2015) observed that the lack of trained librarians and poor

infrastructure significantly hampers the development of information literacy skills in secondary schools. Similarly, Rani and Ramasamy (2019) found a strong correlation between students' library usage and their academic performance, suggesting that regular engagement with library resources enhances critical thinking and independent learning. Mondal (2020) found that school library professionals in the Asansol Sub-division experience moderate job satisfaction, influenced by factors such as working conditions, institutional support, and opportunities for professional growth. The study suggests that improvements in infrastructure and administrative support are necessary. Mondal and Kar (2020) examined marketing practices in government undergraduate college libraries and observed that most libraries lack structured marketing strategies. They emphasized the importance of user orientation, promotional activities, and digital tools to enhance awareness and usage of library services. Mondal and Das (2023) assessed postgraduate students' views on Burdwan University Library and reported general satisfaction with traditional resources, but identified gaps in digital services and ICT facilities. The study highlights the need for continuous service evaluation and modernization. Despite these findings, there is limited region-specific research in districts like Paschim Bardhaman, where educational inequalities persist. This study, therefore, seeks to fill the gap by exploring how students in public secondary schools in this district utilise library resources and develop information literacy competencies.

The primary objective of this study is to examine the relationship between information literacy skills and the use of library resources by students in public

secondary schools in Paschim Bardhaman district, West Bengal, India.

This study is confined to public secondary schools located in the Paschim Bardhaman district of West Bengal, India. It focuses on students in classes IX and X, as these are crucial academic years in the Indian secondary education system. The research emphasises two core areas: (1) the students' level of information literacy skills, and (2) their patterns of library resource use. The scope excludes private schools, higher secondary classes (XII), and schools without a functional library. The findings aim to inform policy decisions at the school and district levels, while also supporting librarians and educators in enhancing information literacy instruction and library services.

RESEARCH METHODS

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design to assess students' information literacy (IL) competencies and their patterns of library resource usage. A structured questionnaire was developed comprising three sections: demographic details, IL skills based on the ACRL standards, and library usage behaviour. The population included students from eight randomly selected public secondary schools in the Paschim Bardhaman district. A stratified random sampling method was employed to ensure proportional representation across gender and grade levels, resulting in a final sample of 400 students from grades 9 and 10. Data were gathered using a 25-item standardised IL questionnaire utilising a 5-point Likert scale and a 10-item library-use checklist. Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics (mean, percentage, and standard deviation) were used for summarisation, while inferential statistics, such as Pearson correlation and linear regression, were employed to determine the relationship between students' levels of information literacy and their use of library resources.

For interpretive purposes, IL scores were classified into low, medium, and high categories.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study are analyzed to understand the level of students' information literacy skills and their patterns of using available library resources. The findings highlight students' abilities to identify information needs, search for relevant information, evaluate sources, and effectively use library facilities such as books, reference materials, and digital resources. The discussion also examines the relationship between students' information literacy competencies and their frequency and purpose of library use.

By interpreting the collected data, this section aims to reveal existing strengths, gaps, and challenges in students' information literacy practices, and to discuss their implications for improving library services and information literacy education in secondary schools within the district.

Table 1
Demographic Information of the Respondent

Variable	Category	Freq.	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	202	50.5
	Female	198	49.5
Grade of Students	9	210	52.5
	10	190	47.5

In Table 1, the demographic analysis of the respondents reveals a well-balanced distribution in terms of gender and grade level. Out of the 400 students surveyed, 202 (50.5%) were male and 198 (49.5%) were female, indicating almost equal participation from both genders, which enhances the representativeness and generalizability of the findings. Concerning grade level, students from class 9 slightly outnumbered those from class 10, comprising 52.5% (210 students) and 47.5% (190 students) of the sample,

respectively. This slight skew towards class 9 may reflect either the actual population distribution in the selected schools or a higher willingness among class 9 students to participate in the survey.

Overall, the demographic composition provides a balanced foundation for analysing differences or similarities in information literacy skills and library usage patterns across gender and grade levels.

The analysis of students' information literacy scores reveals a moderate overall proficiency level among the respondents. As shown in Table 3, out of 400 students, 96 (24%) scored in the low category (≤ 75), indicating limited ability to effectively locate, evaluate, and use information. A majority of students, 220 (55%), fell into the medium range (76–100), suggesting that while they possess a fair level of information literacy, there remains room for improvement in several key areas, such as source evaluation and ethical information use. Notably, only 84 students (21%) demonstrated high information literacy skills with scores exceeding 100, highlighting a relatively small group of highly proficient learners.

Table 2
Information Literacy Score Distribution (max = 125)

Category	Score Range	Freq.	Percentage (%)
Low	≤ 75	96	24
Medium	76–100	220	55
High	> 100	84	21

These findings suggest that while basic competencies are present among most students, targeted interventions and training are essential to elevate more students into the high-performing category.

As shown in Table 3 below, the analysis of the mean scores across different dimensions of information literacy provides valuable insights into the

specific strengths and weaknesses of students.

Table 3
Mean Scores by Skill Dimension

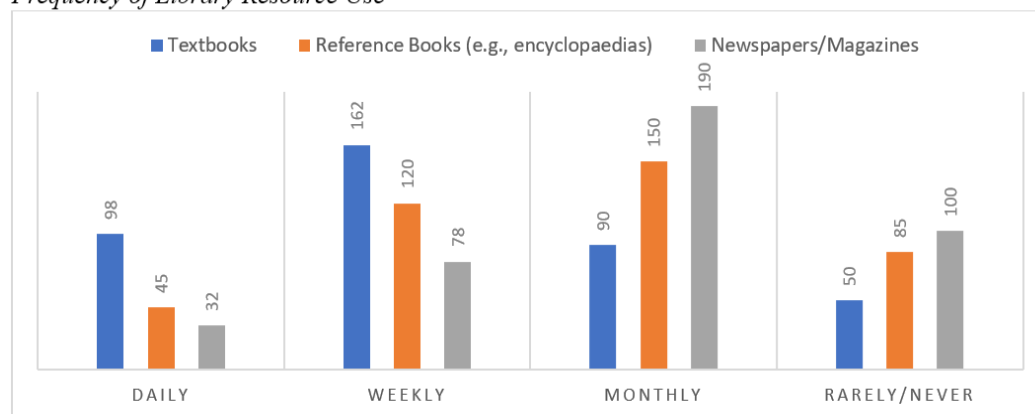
IL Dimension	Mean(\bar{x}) Score	Std. Deviation(σ)
Recognizing Info Need	18.2	4.1
Selecting Sources	16.5	4.8
Evaluating Sources	14.7	5.2

The highest mean score was recorded in the “Recognising Information Need” dimension (mean = 18.2, SD = 4.1), indicating that most students are fairly competent in identifying when they require information. This suggests a good foundational awareness of information-seeking behaviour. The ability to “Synthesise Information” also scored relatively high (mean = 17.0, SD = 4.5), showing students' moderate capacity to combine and interpret information from various sources. However, lower scores were evident in “Selecting Sources” (mean = 16.5, SD = 4.8) and “Evaluating Sources” (mean = 14.7, SD = 5.2), which are crucial for judging the relevance and credibility of information. The lowest mean score was in the “Citing & Ethical Use” dimension (mean = 13.6, SD = 5.6), revealing a significant gap in students' understanding of plagiarism, citation, and

responsible information use. This pattern underscores the need for targeted instruction in evaluating sources and ethical information practices to foster more comprehensive information literacy skills.

As shown in Figure 1, the analysis of library resource usage patterns among students reveals varied frequencies across different resource types, highlighting students' preferences and access behaviours. Textbooks emerge as the most frequently used resource, with 98 students (24.5%) using them daily and 162 (40.5%) weeklies, underscoring their role as a core academic tool. Reference books, such as encyclopaedias, show moderate usage, with only 45 students (11.25%) accessing them daily and a large portion, 150 (37.5%), relying on them monthly, suggesting occasional use for project or exam-related needs. Newspapers and magazines have low daily (8%) and weekly (19.5%) usage, with a majority (72.5%) accessing them only monthly or rarely, indicating limited engagement with current affairs or general reading. A concerning trend is observed in the use of internet and digital resources, where only 20 students (5%) use them daily and a majority of 190 (47.5%) rarely or never use them, pointing to poor digital access or digital literacy. Teacher-assisted sessions show relatively better engagement, with 60 students (15%) participating daily and

Figure 1
Frequency of Library Resource Use



140 (35%) weeklies, suggesting that guided library activities remain a key support mechanism. These findings call for improved digital infrastructure, enriched collections of periodicals, and better integration of library activities into teaching strategies.

The satisfaction levels of students with various aspects of library services reflect a mixed perception, indicating areas of both strength and concern. In terms of book availability, 40% of students expressed satisfaction, while 30% were neutral and 30% dissatisfied, showing a moderate level of contentment but also room for improvement in resource provisioning. Satisfaction declined further when considering the condition of books, where only 35% were satisfied and 40% dissatisfied, highlighting the need for better maintenance and regular updates to the collection. ICT facilities received the lowest satisfaction rating, with just 25% satisfied and a significant 40% dissatisfied, pointing to poor access to digital tools, e-resources, or functional

acknowledging supportive staff, suggesting that human support compensates for some resource-related shortcomings. Overall, these findings reveal a critical need to invest in ICT infrastructure, improve book quality, and enhance physical library environments to elevate the user experience.

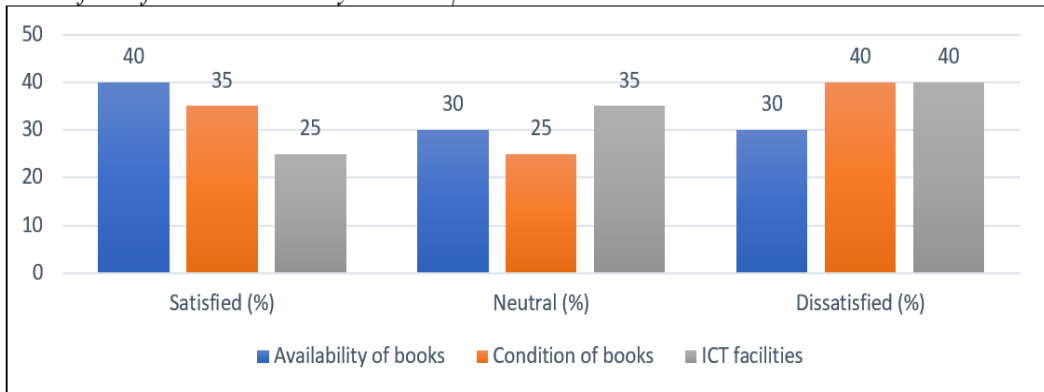
Table 4
Correlation Matrix

Variables	IL Skill Total	Resource Use Frequency
IL Skill Total	1.00	0.63**
Resource Use Frequency	0.63**	1.00

Note: **p < .01

The correlation matrix reveals a strong positive relationship between students' total information literacy (IL) skills and their frequency of library resource use, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.63. This statistically significant correlation (as indicated by the double asterisks, typically denoting $p < 0.01$) implies that students who use library

Figure 2
Level of Satisfaction with Library Facilities/



infrastructure. Library space was rated as satisfactory by only 30% of students, with 40% neutral and another 30% dissatisfied, indicating that while not a major issue, space adequacy and comfort are not fully meeting expectations. On a positive note, library staff assistance garnered the highest satisfaction, with 45% of students

resources more frequently tend to possess higher information literacy skills. Conversely, students with lower engagement in library use are likely to have weaker IL competencies. This finding supports the view that regular interaction with library materials and services contributes positively to the

development of key information-handling skills such as recognizing information needs, evaluating sources, and ethical use of information. It also underscores the importance of encouraging consistent library usage as part of a broader strategy to enhance students' academic and critical thinking capabilities.

Table 5
Regression Analysis Predicting Library Use

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
IL Skill Total	0.45	0.05	0.63	9.00	< .001
Gender (M=1, F=0)	0.10	0.12	0.04	0.83	.41
Grade (9=0;10=1)	-.15	0.11	-0.06	-1.36	.17

The regression analysis reveals that information literacy (IL) skill total is a significant predictor of library resource use frequency among secondary school students. With a standardized beta (β) of 0.63, a t-value of 9.00, and a p-value less than .001, the relationship is both statistically significant and practically meaningful. This suggests that as students' IL skills increase, their frequency of library resource usage also rises substantially. The unstandardized coefficient (B = 0.45) indicates that for every one-unit increase in IL skill score, the predicted increase in resource use frequency is 0.45 units.

In contrast, gender and grade level did not emerge as significant predictors. Gender (M = 1, F = 0) showed a negligible effect ($\beta = 0.04$, $p = .41$), indicating no meaningful difference between male and female students in terms of resource usage. Similarly, grade level (Grade 9 = 0, Grade 10 = 1) also had an insignificant effect ($\beta = -0.06$, $p = .17$), suggesting that the frequency of resource use does not differ significantly between students in grades 9 and 10.

The overall model accounts for 40% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.40$) in resource use frequency, indicating a moderately strong

model fit. These findings reinforce the crucial role of IL skills as a key driver of library engagement, while demographic variables like gender and grade appear to have a limited impact.

Overall, the major findings of this study include the following: 1) the sample had an almost equal representation of male (50.5%) and female (49.5%) students, with slightly more students from Grade 9 (52.5%) than Grade 10 (47.5%). 2) A majority of students (55%) demonstrated medium-level information literacy skills, while 24% had low, and only 21% had high proficiency. 3) Textbooks were the most frequently used resources, with daily and weekly use by 65% of students. In contrast, digital resources such as the internet and e-library facilities were rarely used by 47.5% of students, indicating limited ICT access or literacy. 4) Students showed the highest satisfaction with assistive library staff (45%) and the lowest with ICT facilities (25%). Dissatisfaction was particularly high regarding the condition of books and digital infrastructure. 5) A significant positive correlation ($r = 0.63$, $p < .01$) was found between students' information literacy skills and their frequency of library resource use, suggesting that higher IL proficiency leads to greater engagement with library resources. 6) Information literacy skill was the only significant predictor of library resource usage ($\beta = 0.63$, $p < .001$), while gender and grade level showed no significant influence. 7) The model explained 40% of the variance in resource use behaviour.

The above findings revealed that students possessed moderate levels of information literacy, but significant gaps were identified in critical areas such as information evaluation, ethical use, and proper referencing. Furthermore, the use of library resources beyond textbooks was found to be moderate to low, indicating limited engagement with diverse information sources. These findings

suggest that enhancing information literacy instruction and upgrading library infrastructure, particularly through the integration of ICT tools, could play a vital role in improving students' academic performance and overall learning outcomes.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that information literacy skills play a vital role in shaping students' engagement with library resources in public secondary schools in Paschim Bardhaman district, West Bengal. While most students exhibit moderate levels of information literacy, significant gaps remain in areas like evaluating sources and ethical information use. The strong positive correlation and predictive relationship between IL skills and frequency of resource use underscore the need to integrate information literacy instruction into the school curriculum. Although textbooks remain the most frequently used resource, the underutilization of digital tools and dissatisfaction with ICT facilities indicate infrastructural and training deficiencies. Addressing these gaps through targeted interventions, improved library services, and enhanced teacher support can significantly elevate both the quality of learning and the depth of students' information competencies. To enhance students' information literacy and effective library use, it is essential to integrate IL training into the core curricular activities, ensuring that students develop critical research and evaluation skills as part of their academic experience. Additionally, upgrading library facilities with a particular focus on ICT infrastructure and regular maintenance will improve access to diverse and up-to-date resources. Equally important is the need to train librarians to actively support student learning by facilitating interactive instruction, guiding source evaluation, and promoting the ethical use of information.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest. This research was conducted independently without financial, political, or personal relationships that could inappropriately influence the study's findings or interpretations, or personal relationships that could inappropriately influence the study's findings or interpretations.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

I declare that this manuscript is my original work.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR(S)

Dr Debdas Mondal is the Librarian at S.R. Fatepuria College, West Bengal, India. He has 14 years of experience in his professional area. He has passed B. Com. (Finance), M. Com (Finance), B.Ed., BLIS, MLIS, D.FAS and PhD in Library and Information Science. With a PhD, Dr Mondal brings a wealth of academic expertise and research experience to his role. He is the author and editor of three books and has contributed more than 10 book chapters, 40 articles to reputed journals, and 7 conference proceedings. He is an Editor and Reviewer of many reputed journals.

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