

Information Literacy Level and Research Attitude of Graduate Students at Capiz State University

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Abstract

The study, a descriptive research was conducted to determine the information literacy level and research attitude of graduate students at Capiz State University; to find out if there are significant differences in the level of information literacy and research attitude of respondents when attitude is categorized into research usefulness, research anxiety, positive attitude, relevance to life and difficulty of research when grouped according to their profile. The study covered 134 graduate students enrolled during summer 2015. Findings of the study showed that the information literacy level is high and the research attitude of the graduate students is good. Male respondents belonging to ages between 41yrs old above, single and enrolled in Master in Public Administration and with a background in research work and thesis writing with always available internet access have high information literacy and at the same time have a good attitude towards research. Furthermore, the study showed that there were significant differences in the level of information literacy and research attitude when respondents were grouped according to the graduate program, background in research and the availability of internet connections. Hence, null hypotheses were rejected. There were a strong positive correlation and significant relationship between information literacy and research attitude.

Keywords: social research, information literacy, research attitude level of information literacy, graduate students, Capiz State University

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INTRODUCTION

Advancement of information technology had resulted in the vast information in different forms and kind such that it is difficult to distinguish which of these are correct and relevant. Some are no longer helpful information being biased, misleading and false. The Information Literacy Portal of the University of Idaho (2016) defines information literacy as the ability to identify what information is needed, understand how the information is organized, identify the best sources of information for a given need, locate those sources, evaluate the sources critically, and share that information.

According to Mckillop Library of Salve Regina University (2015), information literacy empowers students to learn for themselves, helps students deal with information overload, encourages the careful evaluation of information sources for bias and inaccuracy and promotes the creation of self-sufficient researchers. Aside from these, information literacy also equip students to become successful in their careers and meet the needs of employers for information literate employees (Mckillop Library, 2015).

To a graduate student, information literacy is of vital importance every time in writing his reports in the class and most especially in writing his thesis or dissertation. An information literate person could provide good and relevant literature reviews to his research thus coming out with high- quality outputs. Little knowledge on how to use information technology as a tool in making research would lead to thinking that writing a thesis or dissertation is the most difficult part of a graduate program. On one hand, some students in the graduate level view research methods courses unfavorably and would shun from it, if given the choice. An understanding of this attitude is necessary to help instructors make the learning easier in order for the students to develop a more favorable and positive research attitude. A good and positive attitude could improve the knowledge and skills of students in doing research for their personal and professional development.

The present study would like to go into finding out the information literacy level of the graduate students and since writing a thesis or dissertation is a must in order for them to get a degree, this study, would also determine their attitude towards research. Finally, the study hopes to find out if information literacy could affect the research attitude.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research, a descriptive study assessed the information literacy

level and research attitude of the graduate students and their significant differences when they were grouped according to their profile.

Respondents of the study were the 134 graduate students out of 196 enrolled at Capiz State University-Main Campus during summer 2015. Majority of the respondents were female, between the ages of 31-40 years old, single and were taking Master of Management (MM). Most of them had experienced writing a thesis and had attended research classes. The respondents had internet access which was only "sometimes available".

The study used a questionnaire to gather the data. Part 1 was for the profile of the respondents. Part II was for the information literacy using the Information Competency Assessment Instrument adapted from Marshall (2006). This instrument is composed of 40 statements concerning feelings about finding and disseminating research information. A Cronbach Alpha of .930 indicates the reliability of the instrument.

Part III was for the research attitude in which a standardized questionnaire by Papanastasiou (2005) was used. The research attitude, in this case, was categorized into a) research usefulness, b) research anxiety, c) positive attitude, d) relevance to life and e) difficulty of research. Responses to the items in the questionnaire were treated with the utmost confidentiality.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Level of Information Literacy as a whole

The graduate students as a whole had a "high" level of information literacy as shown by the mean score of 4.44 (AppendixA, Table1). Findings of the study showed that the graduate students got "very high" in using with confidence the different types of media (print, video, photography, etc.) as information for their topic and in being certain that they can use the information that they found as indicated by their mean scores of 5.75 and 5.47 respectively. They got also "very high" on being able to learn what processes would be helpful for finding information in the future and in knowing the difference between primary and secondary sources. However, they were unsure of how much information they need for their assignments got confused about the many different formats (print, electronic, etc.) when searching for information and that they had questions about the privacy of the information they received.

A study by Singh (2014) revealed that most graduate students close to 45% wanted to learn about various skills in information, search to help themselves in their

research management and scholarly assignments and more than 40% students were keen on learning retrieval techniques and myriad sources of information.

Conway's (2011) study as reviewed by Miller (2014), had shown that postgraduate students had marginally better information literacy skills than the undergraduate students as indicated by their average score of 77% and 69% on a test questionnaire, respectively. The study also showed that 25% of respondents who had previous work experience in a library achieved an average scores of 79%, in contrast to 69% among those who had not worked in a library. The scores for both postgraduate and undergraduate may indicate deficiencies in information literacy skills in several areas, including parsing citations, strategies for locating specific content and defining information need.

A study entitled "Research Students in the Electronic Age" had also shown that the majority of the graduate students did not know when to stop the information searching phase of their research. They made comments such as "it is very difficult" or "you get to a saturation point I guess where you have 400 or so references but you never know whether you've missed something." Another student expressed his apparent dismay at the unending aspect of the information search in his research area: "I don't know the cut-off point and I guess I'll just keep reading until I finish the project. The literature review won't finish until the day I put the final full stop on the thesis" (Williamson, et al., 2007).

Information Literacy when grouped according to profile

Male had a high level of information literacy with ages between 41 years old and above. Single respondents taking Master in Public Administration (MPA) having experienced in conducting research work and in writing thesis had also a high level of information literacy. Same is true with graduate students who can always avail of internet services (Appendix B, Table 2).

Research Attitude of the Graduate Students

Generally, graduate students had a good attitude towards research as indicated by the grand mean of 4.87 (Appendix C, Table3). The table shows that in terms of the usefulness of research and positive attitude, the respondents exhibited a "very good attitude" as indicated by the mean scores of 5.72 and 5.46, respectively. In terms of the relevance of research to life, they had a "good" research attitude. However, their attitude on research anxiety and on the difficulty of research was only "moderately good".

Based on the findings of the study, in terms of research usefulness, the

graduate students strongly believed that research should be taught to all students and considered knowledge in research is as useful as writing. The respondents likewise believed that research is useful to their career and the skills they acquired from it will be helpful to them in the future. In terms of research anxiety, some students felt research scares them and made them anxious. Most of them felt that research is stressful and a complex subject. However, some of the respondents were in the opinion that most students benefited from research and they find research interesting and in fact, they were actually interested and enjoying it as well. All these, indicating a positive attitude towards research. In finding out the relevance of research to life, most of the graduate students felt that being research-oriented thinking plays an important role in daily lives and that they used research in their daily lives. As for the difficulty of research, graduate students find it difficult to understand the concepts of research, had trouble with their arithmetic and made many mistakes in research.

Results of the present study support Zammani's and Resaei's(2013) findings that graduate students view research with positive feelings as shown by highest means on items "research is important for me", "research should be taught to all students", "many important discoveries are the result of the research" and "research is very valuable". The same study had also shown that the research anxiety of graduate students was moderate with the highest mean score on "I need to improve my research skills", "I need to improve my statistical skills" and "it bothers me that my research may not be judged as a quality work"

Research Attitude when Grouped According to Profile

The study showed that when graduate students were grouped according to sex, a male had a better attitude than female as shown by the mean score of 4.94 (Appendix D, Table 4). Respondents with ages between 30 yrs. old and below and with ages between 41 yrs. old and above have also good research attitude. On one hand, students enrolled in MPA had a very good attitude as shown by the mean score of 5.38, when compared with those enrolled in different graduate programs. Students with a background in research work and thesis writing likewise had a very good attitude as shown by the mean score of 5.64, which implies that research backgrounds developed students to become research-oriented hence, finding research a worthwhile endeavor.

Graduate students having internet access which is always available had a better attitude than those students whose internet access is sometimes available and not available at all. Result of the study had shown that the availability of internet connection can help improve the attitude of the graduate students toward research.

Significant Difference in the Information Literacy Level when Respondents were grouped According to their Profile

Sex, Civil Status, and Age. There were no significant differences in the level of information literacy when the graduate students were grouped according to sex and civil status as indicated by the T-test results. Also, no significant difference was noted when they were grouped according to their age. The result implies that regardless of sex, civil status and age, the graduate students had a high level of electronic literacy.

Result of the study was consistent with the findings of Magliaro (2011) that there were no significant differences between group performances that best describe the Information Literacy (IL) of the graduate students when grouped according to gender and age.

Graduate Program. With regards to the graduate program, it showed a significant difference (Appendix E, Table 5). The difference lies between MPA vs. MM vs. MA MAPEH vs. MAIED vs. ED.D programs (Appendix F, Table 6). This means that students enrolled in MPA had higher information literacy level than graduate students enrolled in MM, MA MAPEH, MA IED, and Ed.D.

Background in Research. The p-value of .032 indicates the significant difference in the level of information literacy when graduate students were grouped according to the background in research (Appendix E, Table 5). The significant difference lies in the combinations between research work and thesis writing vs. research work vs. research classes vs. thesis writing and research classes and vs. none which means that graduate students have experienced research work and thesis writing had a higher level of information literacy (Appendix F, Table 6).

Internet Access. When the graduate students were grouped according to internet access, the study showed that there was a significant difference as indicated by the p-value of .014(Appendix E, Table 5). The significant difference lies in the combinations between always available vs. sometimes available and vs. not available. The result implies that those with always available internet access had a higher level of information literacy than those who had only sometimes and in most cases did not have internet access.

Significant Difference in the Research Attitude when Respondents were grouped according to their Profile.

Sex, Civil Status, and Age. Results of the T-test showed there were no significant

differences in the research attitude of the graduate students as a whole and when grouped according to sex and civil status in terms of research usefulness, research anxiety, positive attitude, relevance to life and difficulty of research.

Likewise, there were no significant differences in the research attitude of the graduate students when they were grouped according to age as determined by the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Results imply that regardless of sex, civil status and age, graduate students have a good attitude towards research.

Shaukat's, et al. (2014) findings did not support the present study. Based on their study males had significantly positive attitudes towards research than the females. Also, research attitude and perceived research usefulness for the profession were significantly better in the elder group of students (30-40, and above 40 yrs. old) compared to the younger age group.

Graduate Program. When the graduate students were categorized according to the graduate program enrolled, there were significant differences in the research attitude as a whole and in terms research anxiety and difficulty of research as shown by p-values of .048, .002 and .005, respectively (Appendix G, Table 7). Closed examination of the data showed that the significant difference in the research attitude lies in the combination between MPA vs. MM vs. MA MAPEH vs. MAIED and between ED.D vs. MA MAPEH. This means that generally, MPA students had good research attitude as compared to MM, MA MAPEH and MAIED students (Appendix J Table 10). Result of the study also meant that ED.D students had a better attitude than those MA MAPEH students.

In terms of research anxiety and difficulty of research the significant differences both lies in the combinations between MPA vs. MM, vs. MA MAPEH, vs. MAIED and between ED.D. vs. MAIED students (Appendix J Table 10). The result implies that MPA students had a good attitude towards research anxiety and difficulty of research when compared with the other graduate students. This also shows that MPA students were less anxious and had less difficulty in research. Doctoral students, on one hand, had shown a moderately good attitude than MAIED students.

Findings of Shaukat, et al. (2014) had shown that there were significant differences in the research attitude in terms of research usefulness, positive attitude, and relevance to life considering the different graduate programs.

Background in Research. Based on the finding of the study there was a significant difference in the research attitude of the graduate students as a whole when grouped according to the background in research as shown by a p-value of .037. In terms of research usefulness, a significant difference was noted as indicated by the p-value of

.047 (Appendix H, Table 8).

The significant difference considering the graduate students' background in research lies in the combinations between research work & thesis writing vs. research work vs. research classes vs. thesis writing & research classes and vs. none and between thesis writing vs. none and between research work, thesis writing & research classes vs. none (Appendix J Table 10). This means that generally, graduate students who experienced research work and thesis writing had a "very good research" attitude than those students who had only research work or research classes and sometimes no background at all in research.

In terms of research using the significant difference lies between research classes vs. none, between research work & thesis writing vs. none and between research work, thesis writing & research classes vs. none (Appendix J Table 10). The result indicates that graduate students with a background in research such as research classes, research work, and thesis writing had "very good" attitude towards research which would mean that they recognized the usefulness of research in their daily lives.

Internet Access. Table 9 in Appendix I reveal that there was a significant difference in the research attitude as a whole when the respondents were grouped according to internet access as indicated by the p-value of .031. The significant difference lies in the combinations between always available vs. sometimes available vs. not available which means that graduate students with internet access which is always available had a good attitude towards research.

Relationship between Information Literacy Level and Research Attitude of Graduate Students

Results of the 2-tailed Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient yielded a computed r-value of .688, which indicates a strong positive correlation (Appendix K, Table 11). The p-value of .000 points out the significant relationship between the level of electronic literacy and research attitude. The finding of the study implies that the level of information literacy directly affects the research attitude of the graduate students which means that the more information literate the students are, the more they have good and positive attitudes towards research.

However, in the study of Birch (2012), it was found out that library anxiety did not affect graduate students' information literacy competency. In addition, there was no significant relationship between library anxiety and graduate students taking advantage of information literacy instruction opportunities.

Conclusions

Generally, the information literacy level of CapSU Main graduate students is high and they have a good attitude towards research, more so in terms of research usefulness and a positive attitude. A background in research work and thesis writing and the always availability of internet access can result in a high level of information literacy and good research attitude.

The high information literacy level of the Master in Public Administration students might be due to the always available internet in their respective workplaces.

The null hypotheses stating that there were no significant differences in the level of information literacy and research attitude when respondents were categorized into the graduate program enrolled, background in research and internet access were rejected. And since there are a strong positive correlation and a significant relationship between information literacy and research attitude it follows that graduate students with a high level of information literacy have also a good research attitude.

Recommendations

The researchers recommend that information literacy be incorporated in the courses of a graduate program or orientation classes be conducted to the graduate students on information literacy using the school library facilities. A collaboration between graduate school faculty and school librarian could be initiated to expose graduate students to the different tools in conducting research using information technology through workshops and hands-on use of computers. Internet access should be made available to graduate students during class hours.

Graduate school faculty may be required to attend training and seminars on information literacy to understand students' needs as regards to writing a thesis and dissertation and to develop the interest and positive attitude of students towards research.

Research classes should incorporate information literacy as part of the lesson since if graduate students are information literate most likely they will develop a positive attitude towards research

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