CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS IN DELIVERING INSTRUCTIONAL INFORMATION LITERACY IN MALAYSIAN HIGHER EDUCATION: INSIGHTS FROM KNOWLEDGE PROFESSIONALS

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Abstract*: Teaching librarians are academic librarians who serve academic libraries and are required to teach and deliver instructional information literacy sessions. However, teaching librarians face challenges and barriers in delivering instructional information literacy. This study implemented qualitative research consisting of two rounds of the modified Delphi method, involving ten knowledge professionals spread from teaching librarians, researchers, and academics. A thematic analysis was used in data analysis, and the findings identified five themes in the challenges and barriers: teaching, technology issues, information, sessions, and modules. Eight themes were generated for recommendations to overcome the challenges and barriers. To address these challenges, institutions can better support teaching librarians in their critical role in fostering information literacy skills.*

Keywords*: Academic Library, Academic Librarian, Information Literacy, Teaching Librarian*
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Introduction

Since the early 21st century, the librarianship setting has been growing, involving technology, scholarly communication and publication, models in instructional delivery, and students' learning preferences and affected academic librarians, who must cope with setting reformation (McGuinness, 2021). Librarians are in a dilemma due to ICT is invading the environment and face several challenges (Ubogu, 2021). These changes contributed to new challenges, the lack of online teaching and technology competencies, and forced to deliver information literacy instruction through an online platform (Ramos Eclevia, 2022). Besides traditional roles as library administrators and gatekeepers of information (Nakitare et al., 2020), academic librarians are required to support teaching in information literacy and research support (Otike et al., 2021; Shoham & Klain-Gabbay, 2019) and to deliver instructional information literacy (Dzulkipli et al., 2024). Teaching librarians are responsible for teaching instructional information literacy (Rath, 2022).

Research Problems

The dynamic change in the higher education environment and the uncertain knowledge ecosystems require new attention to focus on basic ideas (Väljataga et al., 2020). Unprepared situations in teaching information literacy at the beginning of their careers led to issues, responsibility in handling the classes, and the need to develop skills of pedagogy in information literacy courses (Moser & Abramovich, 2023). Information overload occurs when someone is illiterate and unable to utilise information effectively and ethically (Bernard, 2023). The need to seek various ways to complete the session by using various online platforms, this skill of handling an online environment has been considered a competency (Paliwal & Singh, 2021) since the pandemic.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are to identify key challenges and barriers to practising teaching librarians in academic libraries, analyse their impact on the quality of library instruction and student learning outcomes, and develop strategies and recommendations to overcome them.

Literature Review

Teaching librarians are academic librarians who focus on teaching in higher education, particularly working with disciplinary faculty members in a classroom to advance and nourish the librarian profession (McCartin & Wright-Mair, 2022) Teaching is part of the main task of their daily work (Houtman, 2021) and the roles have grown tremendously in the academic environment and with the integration of technology (McGuinness, 2021). The focus is not only on instructional information literacy sessions but also on teacher development and identities (Baer, 2021) and teaching activities related to information literacy with the use of technology (Ramos Eclevia, 2022), which include several courses in teaching and learning, such as course designers, content creators, teachers, and library instructional leaders, whether face-to-face or online (Mctavish & Robertson, 2020; Ramos Eclevia, 2022). Collaboration with faculty members to design and deliver subjects embedded in information literacy sessions that are placed within the programs offered by the faculty (Glimstedt et al., 2021) will achieve more fruitful results than libraries alone (Bowles-Terry & Sobel, 2022) to benefit students' learning outcomes. These changes will not put information literacy aside, and students still need information literacy, where they have the assurance to perform basic information searches and evaluate information (Svensson et al., 2022). The study identifies and explores interfering conditions in the conceptual framework shown in Figure 1.
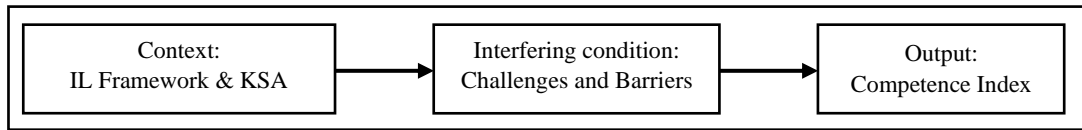
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│ Context:        │      │ Interfering condition:│     │ Output:         │
│ IL Framework &  │ ───> │ Challenges and Barriers│ ──>│ Competence Index│
│ KSA             │      │                     │      │                 │
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Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design using semi-structured interview questions. The population and sampling of 10 panels were selected based on these three characteristics: members of university faculty or research institute, researchers in the study area, and practitioners or teaching librarians (Batool et al., 2021; Khavidaki et al., 2022; Lund, 2020; Rajhans et al., 2020). A modified Delphi method was used in the data collection consisting of two rounds. Round one, a focus group interview to elicit expert viewpoints, followed by an open discussion among panels, was split into two sessions: practitioners and researchers/academics. Round 2 panels were required to rank and assess the main obstacles and hurdles faced by teaching librarians to achieve expert consensus. Thematic analysis analyses findings and emerges through themes, processed using NVivo software.

Findings

Demographic characteristics captured ten panels composition and background profiling distributed in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Profiling

Demographic Variable	Numbers	Valid %	Demographic Variable	Numbers	Valid %
1.Gender:			**3.Experiences:**		
Male	3	30	5-10 years	4	40
Female	7	70	11-22 years	6	60
2. Education:			**4. Categories:**		
Phd	4	40	Teaching Librarian	6	60
Master	3	30	Academic/Researchers	4	40
Bachelor	3	30			

Sixty-nine responses were gathered in round 1; five themes were generated for challenges and barriers, and eight themes were generated for overcoming recommendations. Findings in round 2 is an individual interview identified eight themes spread to three themes as very important, nine themes as moderately important, and one theme as slightly important. These details are listed in Table 2.

Table 2: Themes, Coded References and Mean

Challenges and Barriers			Recommendation		
Themes	Mean	References	Themes	Mean	References
Information	3.8	Information literacy	Subject area	3.7	Aware subject area
		Information share			Different area
Issues	3.3	Network issue	Different background	2.8	Different background

Module	4.3	Technical issue Advanced module	Faculty collaboration	3.9	Convince faculty Proactively approach faculty
		Simple (basic) module	Information	4.1	Information literacy Information needs
Session	3.4	Conducting session			
Teaching	4.0	Teaching session Proper teaching training Teaching librarian	Teaching librarian	3.4	Teaching librarian Assistant librarian Senior teaching librarian
		Teaching session	Upgrade knowledge	3.8	Upgrade knowledge
			Library	3.8	Library equipment Library science
			Skills	3.5	Skill enhancement program Skills gaps Special skills

Discussions & Recommendations

Panels expressed that information literacy sessions lack a comprehensive module or structure in Malaysian academic libraries, and it has been debated to what extent content should be taught in information literacy sessions among researchers and teaching librarians (Rieh et al., 2022) since they are still struggling with proper training and teaching techniques to deliver instructional information literacy, the need for teaching proficiency through effective methods should be the main concern (Hammons, 2020). The root cause is teaching librarians have never been sent to proper training as teaching librarians or in pedagogy skill training, and this caused teaching has always been a grey area in librarianship, stating the academic librarian's foundation in instruction led to the question of whether they were prepared to teach (Saib et al., 2022), if not have or possess training competencies needed in teaching information literacy. Information sharing is one of the concerns among panels in information literacy sessions. Teaching librarians are overwhelmed with the information they share in information literacy sessions where they responded in the interview, to what extent they need to share information in the session to cope with the needing information of their users. A study in Malaysia found that most students in faculty use search engines such as Google as their primary sources since it is easier than academic journals (Maidin et al., 2022). This is where teaching librarians need clear, basic guidance on how to strengthen the teaching of subject library research modules in a wide range when collaborating with related faculty members (Gupta et al., 2024). Teaching librarians need to make the session and teaching activities more fun, simple and enjoyable based on their needs and level of knowledge. Skills in handling technology among teaching librarians have been one of the concerns since the COVID-19 pandemic, where classes are conducted online and using online platforms such as video conferencing applications, and this caused panic in teaching librarians to cope with this technology. Issues related to technology in daily tasks, such as teaching librarians about fast-changing information and communication technologies (ICT), cause teaching librarians to need the ability to handle hardware and software technology (Ubogu, 2021), teaching librarians lack skills in handling technology

infrastructure (Mashiyane et al., 2020). The panels recommended several suggestions or strategies to overcome the challenges and barriers this includes using information and having connections with faculty members in collaborating on faculty subject matter in the information literacy session. Library management is not being left out in this recommendation since they can allocate the budget by sending them training related to teaching skills and knowledge. Library facilities should be upgraded so the process of delivering information literacy through online platforms is not affected. Information is crucial and important, where information literacy enables valuable and efficient teaching and well-off learning (Khan, 2020) and will experience integrative teaching of information literacy to teach subject-specific content to the crowd of information literacy (Baird & Soares, 2020). Knowing credibility in what should be shared in the information literacy session should solve challenges and barriers such as information, teaching and session. A collaboration between teaching librarians and faculty for academic purposes is a crucial success point in teaching librarians skills to enable valuable and efficient teaching and well-off learning (Khan, 2020). Great skills and knowledge in instructional information literacy, a proper module or syllabus of the information literacy curriculum is crucial for an efficient way of delivering instructional sessions (Harrison & Deans, 2021).

Conclusion

Teaching librarians face challenges and barriers in delivering instructional information literacy. By understanding and addressing these challenges, institutions can better support librarians in their critical role of fostering information literacy skills. Strategies for overcoming these challenges include increasing resource allocation, enhancing faculty collaboration, providing targeted training for librarians, and developing innovative approaches to student engagement. By tackling these barriers, we can ensure that students are equipped with the essential skills needed to navigate the complex information landscape of the modern world.

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