

**MEDIA AND INFORMATION
LITERACY: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE
ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS AT
UNIVERSITY OF JOS, PLATEAU
STATE, NIGERIA.**

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Abstract

Nigerian universities face a growing challenge. Students with internet access are consuming online content at high rates, yet the critical skills needed to translate that access into academic benefit remain underutilized. The pervasive digital information landscape of the 21st century requires strong Media and Information Literacy (MIL) skills for effective academic engagement among undergraduate students. This paper investigated the implications of MIL on the academic performance of undergraduate students at the University of Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria, addressing a gap in understanding the interplay of how these competencies influence educational outcomes in a Nigerian tertiary setting. The paper adopted a descriptive survey design drawing on a stratified random sample of 364 undergraduate students drawn proportionately across six faculties from 300 and 400 levels. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of a validated ten-item MIL scale and analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson product-moment correlation, and simple linear regression. Results showed that students self-rated MIL competency at a moderate-to-high level ($M = 3.55$, $SD = 0.59$), with the weakest dimension being awareness of copyright and ethical issues in media use ($M = 3.31$). The Pearson correlation between MIL composite score and Average CGPA was not statistically significant, $r(362) = -.073$, $p = .164$, and MIL composite did not significantly predict CGPA in the regression model, $F(1, 362) = 1.950$, $p = .164$, $R^2 = .005$). The findings suggest that the relationship between MIL competency and academic performance is more complex than a direct linear effect, and is likely shaped by intervening factors including self-discipline, quality of digital engagement, and structural access to educational content. The study recommends the formal integration of MIL into the undergraduate curriculum at the faculty level as a matter of institutional priority.

Keywords: Media, Information, Literacy, Academic Performance, Undergraduates Students, Digital Media, CGPA

INTRODUCTION

The convergence of transformations in information and communications technology (ICT) with increased access and dependence on the internet for education, business and commerce on a global scale has disrupted how the world functions (Suchi & Wika, 2021). With advances in virtual technology, undergraduate students now have access to online tools such as study platforms, libraries, e-books, journals, and other digital sources (Horban & Karakoz, 2024). Integration of contemporary evolution of technology and information environments comes with disruption in learning process of undergraduate students, generating some of the greatest advantages in terms of personalized, limitless, and engaging learning ever but also having some barriers on the ethical challenges (Bapyibi & Lwahas, 2020). Universities may not intentionally teach Media and Information Literacy (MIL), risking a gap between students' ability to use technology and their ability to use information ethically and effectively.

United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), (2021) views MIL as the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and act on information and media across platforms through critical thinking and ethics matters for undergraduates, especially in developing regions. For them, MIL is not only about technical access; it is about the cognitive

ability to navigate, verify, and synthesize information from both digital and traditional sources. Aremu and Udofia (2025) note that undergraduates use digital tools for research, communication and collaboration, data analysis, information sourcing and interpretation, developing and testing assessment materials, supporting online learning, and assessment.

Globally, research increasingly links MIL with academic performance. Studies indicate that students with stronger MIL skills show better critical thinking, stronger evaluation of sources, improved research strategies, and higher-grade point averages (Bjornsson, 2023). The spread of misinformation and disinformation further increases the need for MIL, since susceptibility to false information can weaken the quality of academic work and intellectual development (Turnbull, Chugh, & Luck, 2020). In Nigeria, these challenges reflect socio-technical realities. Even when smartphone use and internet penetration are high among undergraduates, access alone does not guarantee functional or critical literacy. Therefore, universities function as key knowledge sites that bridge this gap by building students' MIL capabilities, improving how they engage with information, and strengthening academic outcomes. Sub-Saharan Africa suggests that MIL can mediate learning by helping students optimize limited resources, reduce

informational noise, and support deeper learning practices that have positive implication on academic performance (Kirotdwa, 2024). The University of Jos provides a compelling case study because it is a major Federal university in Plateau State with a diverse student population and an environment marked by intermittent digital infrastructure and evolving curricular frameworks. Scholarships across

This paper therefore examines the implications of MIL for the academic performance of undergraduate students at the University of Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria, focusing on how MIL helps undergraduate students succeed within the digital information environment and build the competencies needed to thrive in a knowledge-driven society.

Statement of the Problem

Globally, every day students face challenges such as dozens of pieces of contents as news bulletin on radio, a documentary on Netflix, a blog post from a subject expert, a tweet from an anonymous account. These all reach the users through different channels and with different intentions. Distinguishing credible sources from low-quality content, and limited skills in evaluating evidence, referencing, and synthesizing information are likely to be challenges that can directly affect academic performance by weakening research quality,

comprehension of course content, and the production of well-argued academic work.

In Nigeria, and specifically at the University of Jos, undergraduates are expected to conduct independent research and use scholarly information for assignments and examinations. However, there is likely limited local evidence on the extent of MIL competency among University of Jos undergraduates, whether MIL competency significantly relates to their academic performance, and what practical, evidence-based strategies can be used to integrate MIL into the University's curriculum effectively.

Therefore, this paper addresses the problem of likely insufficient understanding regarding the level of students' MIL competencies and the extent to which those competencies can influence academic performance, as well as the need for curriculum integration strategies that can improve students' information evaluation and academic achievement.

Objective of the study

This paper addresses the following objectives:

1. To assess the level of MIL competency among undergraduate students at the University of Jos.
2. To examine the relationship between MIL competency and academic

performance of undergraduate students at University of Jos

3. To identify evidence-based strategies for MIL integration into the University of Jos curriculum.

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Media and Information Literacy (MIL)

The level of literacy of undergraduate students and its role in academic performance has been a matter of debate for some time. MIL is conceptualized as a composite, multidimensional competency, not a single skill. UNESCO (2021), defines MIL as the interrelated abilities to access, retrieve, understand, evaluate, and use information and media content, as well as create and share such content in all formats and use various tools, in a critical, ethical, and effective manner for personal, professional, and societal engagement. In higher education, MIL extends beyond basic digital literacy and supports scholarly inquiry, evidence-based learning, and independent thinking (Kimani & Onyancha, 2015).

Academic Performance

Academic performance refers to the extent to which students achieve stated learning goals and is commonly operationalized through Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA), a standard measure used by the University of Jos and many

Nigerian universities to quantify overall achievement across courses and semesters. However, contemporary research conceptualizes academic performance more broadly than grades, including outcomes such as critical thinking, depth of learning, research skill development, and reflective learning engagement (Ala, Raji, & Sanni, 2025). Academic achievement is similarly described as measurable educational objectives often assessed through examinations and continuous assessment (Nurfadila, 2019). Overall, academic performance serves as an indicator of students' knowledge, skills, and effort and is widely used as a proxy for cognitive competence and educational quality (Ala, Raji, & Sanni, 2025).

Undergraduate Students

Undergraduate students are learners enrolled in tertiary institutions pursuing first-degree programmes across different disciplines (John, 2019). Because they typically engage in substantial academic workload, they often search for and use information from diverse sources to support learning, and their academic performance is increasingly linked to MIL skills, particularly in identifying credible information on the internet (John, 2019). In Nigeria, many undergraduates transition from secondary education through processes

such as WAEC/NECO, JAMB, and POST-UTME screening.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Media Literacy Theory

This paper is anchored on the Media Literacy Theory. The origins of Media Literacy Theory can be traced back to the early 20th century when the Frankfurt School critiqued the rise of mass media, particularly its role in manipulating public opinion and culture. In the mid-20th century, the work of Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980), expanded the focus to understanding the effects of media technologies on human perception, communication, education and society. The rise of the Internet and social media further underscored the need for media literacy, as misinformation and diverse content sources became prevalent. Media Literacy Theory key assumptions encompass the skills and knowledge necessary for individuals to critically and effectively engage with media content. As media increasingly permeates everyday life, understanding how to analyse, evaluate, and create media becomes essential for informed citizenship and effective communication. (Masterman, 1985). The theory holds that media literacy is not a binary skill but a continuum of competencies that develop through education and deliberate practice (Potter, 2004). It distinguishes between declarative knowledge about media, such as knowing that content

can be biased or unverified, and the demonstrated ability to apply that knowledge when evaluating specific content encountered in daily use. Potter (2004) argues that media literacy development is cumulative and context-dependent; that is, the same person may exhibit high evaluative capacity in a familiar domain (finance, for instance, or their discipline's primary literature) and limited evaluative capacity in domains where they consume content more passively. This has direct implications for higher education.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

The review is organized around the three research objectives and is guided by the theoretical assumptions of Media Literacy Theory, particularly in understanding levels of MIL competency to produce differential academic outcomes among undergraduate students. Research on MIL among Nigerian undergraduates has grown substantially since 2020, largely driven by the rapid expansion of smartphone access and social media use.

Adekunmisi, Oyewusi, and Aramide (2022) assessed information literacy skills among students at Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ogun State, and found that while general awareness of credibility and sourcing concepts were present, students showed consistent gaps in actual evaluative behaviour, particularly when engaging with social media content. Their findings mirror

the self-report versus observed MIL competency gap documented in the present paper. Similarly, Acheme, Ademoseye, Aondover, Olugbenga, and Odihi (2025) examined MIL awareness and media influence recognition among undergraduates in Nigeria's North-Central zone and found that students were more likely to recognize media influence in the abstract than to identify its operation in specific pieces of content they themselves consumed. This selective awareness is consistent across multiple studies and suggests a structural gap that MIL competency is not being systematically built through the curriculum.

Furthermore, evidence suggests that the relationship between MIL and academic is mixed. Soyemi and Inazu (2022) found that self-rated information literacy skills among Nigerian undergraduates did not significantly predict responsible information behaviour, therefore suggesting that self-assessment alone is an unreliable representation for actual competency or for academic outcome. Dada (2025) found discipline- and platform-specific patterns in the academic benefits of digital content use at Lagos State University, with YouTube used for academic purposes producing clearer benefits than TikTok, which was associated with higher distraction. These findings point to the importance of content type and purposiveness of use, not merely of

broad MIL awareness, in determining academic outcomes.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study used a quantitative approach implemented through a descriptive survey design suitable for describing how a phenomenon is distributed across a defined population and examining relationships among variables at a particular point in time.

Population and Sample

The target population comprised undergraduate students in 300 and 400 levels across six faculties of the University of Jos. Using the 2022–2023 enrolment record from the University's Directorate on Academic Planning and Management 2022-2023, the eligible population was 3,606 students, and the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula produced a minimum sample of 347 at 95% confidence and 5% margin of error. A 10% attrition buffer increased the target to 382, and 364 fully completed questionnaires were returned (95.3% response rate).

Research Instrument

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire with two sections: socio-demographic information and a Media and Information Literacy (MIL) scale. The MIL scale consisted of 10 items developed from UNESCO's (2013) MIL competency

dimensions and measured on a five-point Likert scale (1–5). Higher scores indicated higher self-rated MIL competency, while Average CGPA was captured in four ordinal ranges.

Normality Assessment

Before conducting inferential analysis, the study assessed normality for the MIL composite score and Average CGPA. The MIL score showed minimal positive skewness (0.058) and acceptable excess kurtosis (0.742), indicating an approximately symmetric distribution, though Shapiro–Wilk was significant due to sample size sensitivity. Average CGPA similarly had low skewness (–0.021) and acceptable kurtosis (–0.226), so both variables were considered sufficiently normal for Pearson correlation and regression.

Hypotheses

H₁: There is no statistically significant relationship between the level of Media and Information Literacy and the academic performance of undergraduate students at the University of Jos.

H₂: Media and Information Literacy competency does not significantly predict the academic performance of undergraduate students at the University of Jos.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Sample size: 364 respondents; Gender: 215 males (59.1%); 149 females (40.7%); Age distribution: Majority aged 21–23 years (42.6%); Academic level: More respondents at 300-level (56.6%) than 400-level (43.4%); Faculty distribution: Medical Sciences (23.9%); Social Sciences (21.4%); Management Sciences (17.9%); Environmental Sciences (8.5%, lowest); CGPA distribution: 2.50–3.49 (45.3%); 3.50–4.49 (43.1%); Below 2.50 (6.6%); 4.50 and above (4.9%). Overall, the demographic profile shows students across faculties, academic levels, gender groups, and CGPA categories at the University of Jos. This balanced spread reduces the dominance of any single group and strengthens the credibility of the analysis of Media and Information Literacy (MIL) and academic performance. Most respondents are within the typical undergraduate age range (21–23 years), and the varied distributions across faculties and CGPA categories provide a robust basis for examining the relationship between MIL competencies and academic performance across different academic standings

ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Research Objective 1: Level of Media and Information Literacy among undergraduate students at the University of Jos?

Table 1 below presents the mean scores for the MIL scale items.

Table 1: Media and Information Literacy Scale Item Statistics (N = 364)

Item	MIL Statement	M	SD	Interpretation
MIL1	Can evaluate whether online content is credible or misleading	3.50	1.08	Moderate
MIL2	Aware that online content may contain misinformation	3.61	1.00	Moderate
MIL3	Verifies information from online sources before academic use	3.45	0.96	Moderate
MIL4	Understands the difference between entertainment and educational content	3.63	0.96	Moderate
MIL5	Can critically analyse messages conveyed in media content	3.56	0.94	Moderate
MIL6	Aware of the impact of media on own behaviour and thinking	3.74	0.90	High
MIL7	Knows how to search for educational content online	3.67	1.05	Moderate
MIL8	Can distinguish factual from fictional content	3.53	0.99	Moderate
MIL9	Use online platforms responsibly for academic purposes	3.46	0.96	Moderate
MIL10	Aware of copyright and ethical issues in media usage	3.31	1.10	Moderate
Overall MIL Composite		3.55	0.59	

Table 1 shows the mean scored for MIL items ranged from 3.31 to 3.74, indicating a generally moderate level of MIL competency among respondents. The overall MIL composite score was $M = 3.55$ ($SD = 0.59$). Based on equal interval classification, 46.4% of respondents demonstrated high MIL competency, 50.8% demonstrated moderate competency, while only 2.7% exhibited low competency. Among the individual items, respondents recorded the highest mean score on awareness of the impact of media on behaviour and thinking

($M = 3.74$, $SD = 0.90$). On the contrary, awareness of copyright and ethical issues in media use ($M = 3.31$, $SD = 1.10$) recorded the lowest mean score. Furthermore, analysis of the core MIL dimensions revealed that Access represented the strongest competency ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 0.82$), demonstrating that students were relatively proficient in locating information through digital platforms and online resources. In contrast, Evaluation had the lowest mean ($M = 2.78$, $SD = 0.89$), indicating comparatively weaker competence in assessing the credibility,

accuracy, and bias of information sources. These findings suggest that, although respondents can access digital information, there is a need to strengthen critical evaluation and ethical information-use competencies.

Research Objective 2: The relationship between MIL competency and academic performance?

A Pearson product-moment correlation was computed to examine the relationship

between the overall MIL composite score and respondents' self-reported CGPA category. The analysis revealed a weak negative relationship that was not statistically significant, $r(362) = -.073$, $p = .164$. The null hypothesis which states that there is no statistically significant relationship between the level of Media and Information Literacy and the academic performance of undergraduate students at the University of Jos is therefore retained. Table 2 presents the correlation matrix.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation Between MIL Composite and Average CGPA

Variable	M	SD	1	2
1. MIL Composite	3.55	0.59	—	-.073
2. Average CGPA (ordinal)	2.46	0.69	-.073	—

Research Objective 3: Does MIL significantly predict academic performance among undergraduate students?

A simple linear regression analysis was performed to determine whether Media and Information Literacy significantly predicted respondents' self-reported CGPA category. The regression model was not statistically significant, $F(1, 362) = 1.950$, $p = .164$, with an R^2 of .005. The regression coefficient for MIL was $B = -0.086$ ($SE = 0.062$), $\beta = -.073$, $t = -1.396$, $p = .164$, indicating that

Media and Information Literacy did not significantly predict respondents' academic performance. Therefore, the null hypothesis² which states Media and Information Literacy competency does not significantly predict the academic performance of undergraduate students at the University of Jos is retained. Table 3 presents the regression output.

Table 3: Linear Regression: MIL Composite Predicting Average CGPA

Predictor	B	SE (β)	t	p
(Constant)	2.769	0.222	12.500	< .001
MIL Composite	-0.086	0.062	-1.396	.164

The findings suggest that although respondents generally reported moderate levels of Media and Information Literacy, these competencies alone were insufficient to explain differences in academic performance. This implies that students' academic achievement is likely influenced by additional factors beyond self-reported MIL competency.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Level of MIL Among Undergraduate students

The findings show that undergraduate students at University of Jos had a moderate Media and Information Literacy. Competencies related to information access and awareness were stronger, while skills involving critical evaluation of sources and ethical media use were weaker. This aligns with Media Literacy Theory (Potter, 2004), which emphasizes that true media literacy involves higher order skills such as analysis, evaluation, and critical judgement, not just technical access. Consistent with Kimani and Onyancha (2015) and Adekunmisi, Oyewusi, and Aramide (2022), undergraduate students may be able to search for information but often fail to apply critical evaluation consistently.

Relationship between MIL and academic performance

There was no statistically significant relationship between overall MIL competency and students CGPA. Although students self-reported moderate MIL skills, these did not translate into higher academic performance. Media Literacy Theory explains this by suggesting that media literacy impacts learning only when students apply it consistently in context such as during assignments and examinations. The finding is consistent Soyemi and Inazu (2022), which suggests that self-rated literacy may overestimate actual competence.

MIL as a predictor of Academic Performance

MIL also did not significantly predict academic performance, accounting for less than 1% of the variation in CGPA. MIL appears to function as an enabling competency rather than a direct determinant of academic achievement. Undergraduate student may have knowledge but may not translate it into behaviours that improve grades. While studies, Bjornsson, 2023; Ala, Raji, and Sanni (2025) reported positive associations, this finding supports Kimani and Onyancha (2015) that MIL measured through self-report may not reflect true performance-based competence. Therefore, the use of performance-based assessments of MIL and reform curricula to ensure students

apply critical evaluation, ethical media use and evidence-based research in course work.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

This paper advances Media Literacy Theory (Potter, 2004) by showing that Media and Information Literacy (MIL) does not function as a direct determinant of academic performance. Although students demonstrated moderate MIL competency, both correlation and regression analyses found no statistically significant relationship between MIL and CGPA. The results reinforce Potter's view that media literacy has educational value only when competencies are practically applied, rather than through awareness or self-assessment. The paper further suggests that critical evaluation and ethical information use may require stronger integration into authentic learning activities before measurable academic effects emerge, highlighting the role of contextual and behavioural factors in translating MIL into achievement. The University of Jos and the NUC should strengthen MIL through assessable curriculum reforms and accreditation benchmarks, while future research should use longitudinal, performance-based MIL measures and verified academic records to better clarify the MIL-performance relationship.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Cross-sectional design: Data reflect perceptions and behaviours at one point in time, so the paper cannot establish causality or track changes across the academic year. A longitudinal design would strengthen causal inference. Self-reported CGPA: Academic performance was measured using self-reported average CGPA grouped into ordinal bands, which is less precise than verified transcripts and may involve recall error and social desirability bias. Future studies should use verified academic records or more detailed performance data.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The University of Jos should integrate MIL as a formal, assessable curriculum component starting at 100-level and progressively deepening in higher levels, rather than relying on incidental exposure through General Studies. The NUC should embed MIL learning outcomes into minimum academic standards for accreditation purposes.

Conclusion

This paper examined the implications of MIL for undergraduate academic performance at the University of Jos. Students showed moderate MIL competency, particularly in accessing digital information, but were comparatively weaker in critical evaluation and ethical media use. Importantly, MIL was

not significantly correlated with or predictive of CGPA, indicating that while MIL is essential for navigating digital environments, its effect on academic achievement is not direct and insufficient on its own. The paper concludes that MIL benefits depend on students' effective application of critical evaluation, ethical information use, and reflective learning within authentic academic contexts.

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