

Information Literacy Skills and Career Decision-Making among Secondary School Students in Jigawa State

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Received: 22/06/2026 Accepted: 01/08/2026 Published: 19/09/2026	<i>This study examined the relationship between information literacy skills and career decision-making among secondary school students in Jigawa State. Specifically, the study assessed students' information literacy skills, identified their sources of career information, examined their level of career decision-making, and identified challenges affecting their access, evaluation and use of career information. The study was anchored on the SCONUL Seven Pillars Model of Information Literacy. A descriptive correlational cross-sectional survey design was adopted. The population comprised 48,628 senior secondary school students in public secondary schools in Jigawa State. A multistage sampling technique was employed, involving the inclusion of all 27 Local Government Areas, selection of one public secondary school from each Local Government Area, and proportionate simple random sampling of students. Using Taro Yamane's formula at a 5% margin of error, a sample size of 464 students was obtained. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire validated by experts in Library and Information Science, Guidance and Counselling, Educational Measurement and Evaluation, and Research Methodology. Data were analysed using mean, standard deviation, frequencies, percentages, ranking and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation. The findings revealed that students possessed a high level of information literacy skills (overall $M = 3.44$), although their ability to evaluate the credibility and relevance of career information was comparatively lower ($M = 3.21$). Parents/guardians (78.7%), teachers (73.7%) and friends/classmates (67.9%) were the major sources of career information. Students also demonstrated a high level of career decision-making (overall $M = 3.41$), particularly in considering their interests and abilities. Major challenges included inadequate reliable career information (75.0%), inadequate guidance and counselling services (72.6%) and difficulty identifying reliable online career information (70.3%). The study further established a significant positive relationship between information literacy skills and career decision-making ($r = 0.614, p < 0.05$), leading to rejection of the null hypothesis. The study concluded that information literacy skills constitute an important factor in students' ability to make informed career decisions. It recommended strengthening information-literacy education, critical evaluation skills, guidance and counselling services, and access to current and reliable career-information resources.</i>	
Keywords: Information Literacy Skills; Career Decision-Making; Career Information; Secondary School Students; Information-Seeking Behaviour; SCONUL Seven Pillars Model		
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Introduction

Information literacy has become an important competence for students because they increasingly encounter information from diverse sources, including libraries, websites, social media, databases and other digital platforms. It encompasses the ability to recognise an information need, identify

appropriate sources, locate and access information, evaluate its quality, and use it effectively and ethically. These competencies are particularly important for secondary school students who must obtain information not only for academic purposes but also for making decisions about subjects,

educational pathways and future occupations. The SCONUL Working Group on Information Literacy (2011) similarly conceptualised information literacy as the ability to recognise information needs, identify appropriate sources, locate and access information, evaluate it, and organise and use it effectively.

Career decision-making is an important developmental task for secondary school students because choices made at this stage can influence subsequent educational and occupational pathways. Students are required to consider their interests, abilities, aspirations and available educational and occupational opportunities when making career decisions. However, the process can be difficult when students lack adequate and reliable career information. Evidence from Nigeria indicates that secondary school students experience substantial difficulties in making career decisions, with such difficulties occurring across several dimensions of the career decision-making process (Akpochafo, 2020).

The relationship between information and career decision-making is particularly important because students do not simply need access to career information; they need the ability to process and apply it appropriately. In a Nigerian study of secondary school students, Adebowale (2014) found that students obtained career information from several sources, including parents, schools and role models, but information obtained from parents and school counsellors showed a positive relationship with students' career choices. The study consequently recommended stronger collaboration between school counsellors and parents as well as more frequent career-development programmes.

The importance of information literacy in career decision-making can be further explained through the SCONUL Seven Pillars of Information Literacy Model. The model identifies seven interconnected dimensions of information literacy: identify, scope, plan, gather, evaluate, manage and present. Rather than viewing information literacy as a linear process, the model presents these capabilities as interconnected and developing according to an individual's information environment, background and experience (SCONUL Working Group on Information Literacy, 2011). In the context of career decision-making, a student should be able to identify the information needed for a career choice, determine the appropriate sources, plan a search, gather relevant information, evaluate its credibility and relevance, manage the information obtained and use it appropriately in making a career decision.

The SCONUL perspective is particularly useful for understanding secondary school students because information literacy involves more than the technical ability to search for information. Students must be able to recognise gaps in their knowledge, distinguish between different types of information sources, assess the currency and credibility of information, and apply information appropriately to particular situations (SCONUL Working Group on

Information Literacy, 2011). This is especially relevant to career information, where students may encounter conflicting information about university programmes, admission requirements, professional qualifications, occupations, employment opportunities and emerging careers. Consequently, possessing stronger information-literacy competencies may enable students to make more informed comparisons among career alternatives.

The issue is particularly worthy of investigation in Jigawa State, where secondary school students are expected to make important educational and occupational choices within an increasingly complex information environment. Recent Nigerian evidence also demonstrates that guidance and information services can contribute to students' career decision-making, while weaknesses in the provision of such services can limit their effectiveness (Yakubu, 2026). Therefore, examining Information Literacy Skills and Career Decision-Making among Secondary School Students in Jigawa State is important for establishing whether students possess the competencies required to locate, evaluate and use career information effectively. The findings could provide useful evidence for guidance counsellors, teachers, librarians and education administrators in designing integrated information-literacy and career-guidance programmes that support informed career choices among secondary school students.

Statement of the Problem

Career decision-making is a critical task for secondary school students because choices concerning subjects, further education and occupations can shape their subsequent educational and professional pathways. However, evidence indicates that many Nigerian secondary school students experience difficulties in making appropriate career decisions. Akpochafo (2020), for instance, found that secondary school students in Nigeria experienced career decision-making difficulties across nine of the ten dimensions examined. Such difficulties suggest that students may require not only guidance and counselling but also adequate competencies to identify, obtain, evaluate and apply relevant career information.

The problem is further complicated by the way students obtain and process career information. Evidence from Nigerian secondary schools shows that students depend substantially on parents, teachers, counsellors and role models for career information, while the quality and usefulness of the information available to them may vary. Adebowale (2014) found that information obtained from parents and school counsellors had a positive relationship with students' career choices and recommended more systematic career-development programmes. Similarly, Onuoha et al. reported that although students were aware of several career-information sources, delays and inaccuracies in information received constituted important challenges.

The emergence of digital information sources has further increased the quantity and diversity of career information available to students, but access to information does not necessarily mean that students possess the skills required to use it effectively. Nigerian research has reported limitations in the use of ICT for career-information dissemination, including inadequate computer facilities and students' limited basic computer skills (Omeje & Ugwuanyi, 2013). More recently, research on guidance services in Nigeria has continued to emphasise the need to strengthen career-information delivery and professional guidance services to support students' career decision-making (Yakubu, 2026).

Against this background, there is a need to examine whether information literacy skills, particularly students' ability to identify information needs, locate appropriate career information, evaluate its credibility and relevance, and use it effectively, are associated with their ability to make informed career decisions. While existing Nigerian studies have examined career-information sources, guidance services and career decision-making difficulties, there appears to be limited empirical attention to the specific relationship between information literacy skills and career decision-making among secondary school students in Jigawa State. The absence of such evidence creates a contextual and empirical gap that the present study seeks to address. It will therefore investigate the information literacy skills of secondary school students in Jigawa State and determine how these skills relate to their career decision-making.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to examine the relationship between information literacy skills and career decision-making among secondary school students in Jigawa State.

Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Assess the level of information literacy skills possessed by secondary school students in Jigawa State.
2. Determine the sources of career information used by secondary school students in Jigawa State.
3. Examine the level of career decision-making among secondary school students in Jigawa State.
4. Identify the challenges affecting students' ability to access, evaluate and use career information for career decision-making in secondary schools in Jigawa State.

Research Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between information literacy skills and career decision-making among secondary school students in Jigawa State.

Literature Review

Information literacy refers to the integrated abilities required to recognise an information need, discover and evaluate information, understand how information is produced and

valued, and use information appropriately and ethically. The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) emphasises that information literacy involves reflective discovery of information, critical understanding of information production and value, and responsible use of information. For secondary school students, these abilities are relevant to both academic and personal information needs because students must increasingly identify, search, evaluate and apply information obtained from both traditional and digital sources.

The SCONUL Seven Pillars of Information Literacy Model provides a useful conceptualisation of the skills required for effective information use. The model identifies seven interconnected capabilities: identify, scope, plan, gather, evaluate, manage and present. Thus, an information-literate student should be able to recognise an information gap, determine what information is required, develop strategies for locating it, retrieve appropriate information, evaluate its quality, organise it ethically and apply or communicate the information effectively (SCONUL Working Group on Information Literacy, 2011).

In relation to secondary school students, information literacy therefore extends beyond knowing how to search the Internet or use a library. It involves the ability to distinguish reliable information from inaccurate or misleading information, compare information from different sources, recognise authority and relevance, and apply information to a particular decision. The ACRL Framework similarly stresses that information has different dimensions of value and that learners should critically examine information sources and their production rather than accept retrieved information uncritically. These competencies are particularly important in career decision-making, where inaccurate information about courses, institutions, qualifications or occupations could contribute to inappropriate choices.

Career information sources constitute the channels through which students obtain information about occupations, educational programmes, qualifications, employment opportunities and career pathways. Such sources may include parents, teachers, school counsellors, peers, libraries, career publications, institutional websites, social media and other digital platforms. Research among Nigerian secondary school students found that parents, teachers and churches were among the sources about which students were most aware, while parents, classmates and teachers were among the sources most frequently used. The study also identified delays and inaccuracies in information received as important challenges (Onuoha et al., 2013).

The usefulness of career information depends not merely on the availability of sources but also on students' ability to process and apply the information obtained. Adebowale (2014) found that secondary school students in Osun State used different strategies for processing career information and examined the sources available to them in relation to their

career choices. This suggests that career-information provision should be accompanied by competencies that enable students to determine which information is relevant, credible and useful for their particular career circumstances.

Career decision-making involves the process through which individuals consider available educational and occupational alternatives and make choices consistent with their interests, abilities, aspirations and circumstances. For secondary school students, the process can include decisions about subject combinations, post-secondary education, vocational pathways and eventual occupations. Nigerian evidence indicates that career decision-making can be difficult for secondary school students, making appropriate career information and guidance particularly important (Akpochofo, 2020).

The role of information and guidance in career decision-making is also supported by recent Nigerian evidence. Yakubu (2026) found that students perceived counselling and information services as helpful to career decision-making and reported a significant influence of counselling-service components on students' career decision-making. The study consequently recommended strengthening professional counselling and career-information delivery in secondary schools. Similarly, evidence on parental guidance indicates that parents constitute an important influence on students' career choices, although professional counsellors can provide specialised assistance in making informed career decisions (Siyan et al., 2018).

The relationship between information literacy and career decision-making can be understood through the information processes involved in making a career choice. A student who can identify a career-information need, develop an appropriate search strategy, locate relevant sources, evaluate their credibility and apply the information is potentially better positioned to compare alternatives and make an informed decision. The SCONUL model provides a direct conceptual basis for this relationship because its seven pillars move from identifying an information need through gathering and evaluating information to managing and applying knowledge (SCONUL Working Group on Information Literacy, 2011).

However, access to career information does not automatically translate into effective career decision-making. Students may have access to numerous sources but encounter inaccurate, outdated or conflicting information, or lack the skills required to evaluate it. Nigerian research has specifically identified delays and inaccuracies in career information received by secondary school students as challenges to information seeking (Onuoha et al., 2013). The implication is that information literacy may serve as an important competency that enables students to transform available career information into usable knowledge for decision-making.

Students' effective use of career information can be constrained by both information-related and institutional factors. These include inadequate access to reliable career information, delays in obtaining information, inaccurate information, limited guidance services and insufficient opportunities for students to interact with qualified counsellors. Onuoha et al. (2013) identified delays and inaccuracies in information received as prominent challenges among Nigerian secondary school students, while Yakubu (2026) identified the need to strengthen career-information delivery and professional counselling services.

The digital transformation of information provision also introduces additional challenges. Although digital platforms can expand students' access to career information, effective use requires students to possess appropriate information-evaluation and management skills. The ACRL Framework emphasises that information literacy requires critical engagement with information sources, including understanding how information is produced, valued and used. Therefore, the challenge is not simply whether students can access career information but whether they can identify, evaluate, manage and apply credible information to their career choices.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the SCONUL Seven Pillars of Information Literacy Model developed by the SCONUL Working Group on Information Literacy. The 2011 model conceptualises information literacy through seven interconnected pillars: Identify, Scope, Plan, Gather, Evaluate, Manage and Present (SCONUL Working Group on Information Literacy, 2011). The model recognises that information literacy is a continuing and developmental process and that individuals can occupy different levels of competence across the pillars depending on their information needs, experience and context.

The model provides a strong theoretical basis for the present study because each pillar can be related to the process of career decision-making. Identify relates to recognising the information required for a career choice; Scope involves determining existing knowledge and information gaps; Plan concerns developing strategies for locating career information; Gather involves accessing relevant information; Evaluate concerns assessing its credibility, relevance and quality; Manage involves organising and using information ethically; while Present involves applying and communicating the knowledge gained. Accordingly, the model provides the theoretical explanation for the study's expectation that students with stronger information literacy skills will be better positioned to access, evaluate and use career information in making informed career decisions.

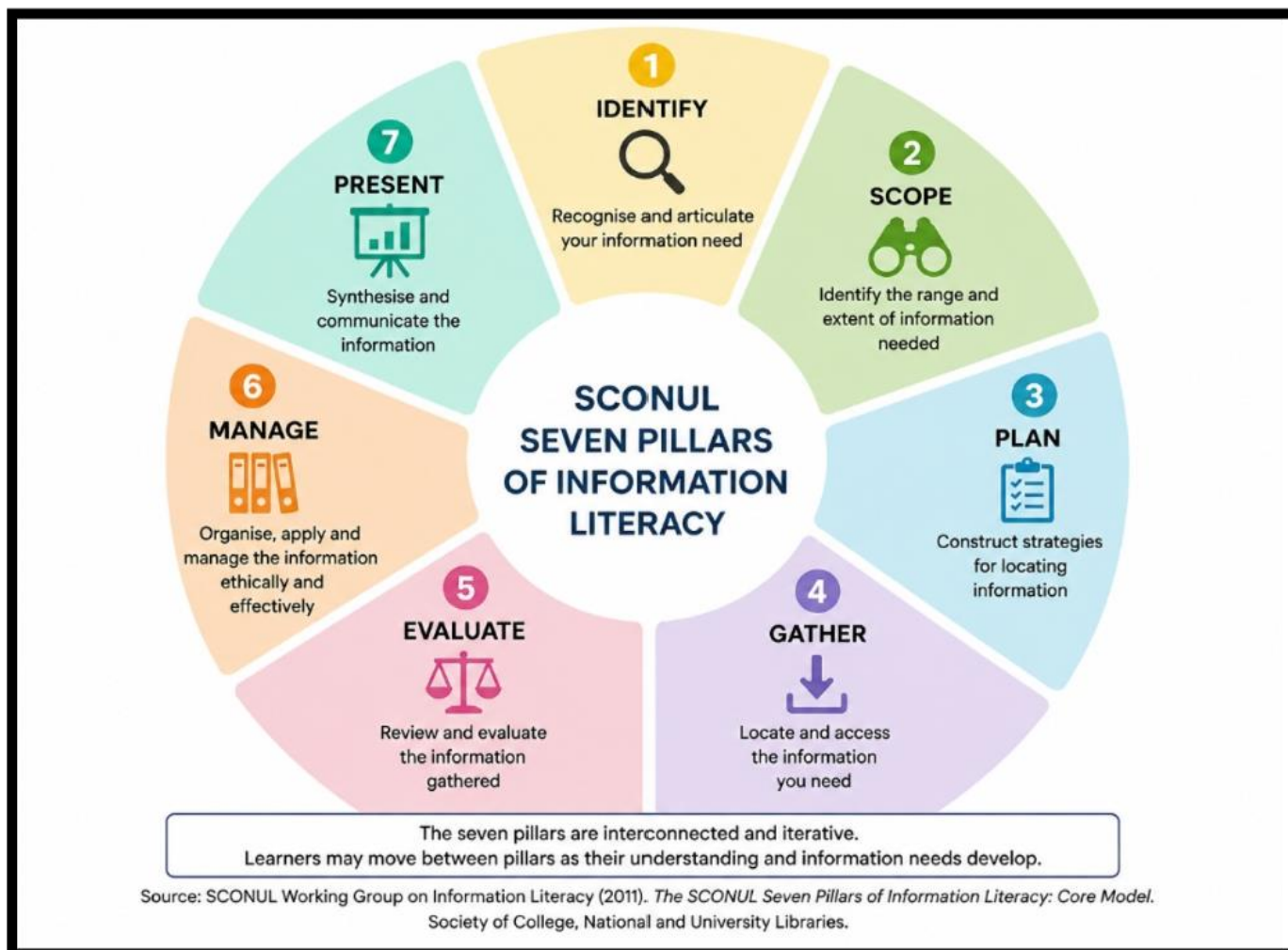


Figure 1.0: The SCONUL Seven Faces of Information Literacy

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive correlational cross-sectional survey design, as it sought to assess students' information literacy skills, identify their sources of career information, determine their level of career decision-making, and establish the relationship between information literacy skills and career decision-making at a single point in time. The population comprised 48,628 senior secondary school students in public secondary schools in Jigawa State. A multistage sampling technique was employed. First, all 27 Local Government Areas (LGAs) were purposively included to ensure complete geographical coverage of the State. Second, one public secondary school was selected from each LGA. Finally, students were selected from the sampled schools using proportionate simple random sampling based on their student population. The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane's formula at a 5% margin of error, and the resulting 464 sample was proportionately allocated across the 27 selected schools. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire which was subjected to face and content validation by experts in Library and Information Science, Guidance and Counselling, Educational Measurement and Evaluation, and Research Methodology. A pilot study was conducted among students from comparable schools outside the study sample, and Cronbach's alpha was used to

determine internal consistency, with a coefficient of 0.70 or above considered acceptable.

Following approval from the relevant educational authorities and permission from participating schools, the questionnaires were administered to the sampled students, with trained research assistants assisting where necessary. Participation was voluntary, and confidentiality and anonymity were maintained. Data analysis was guided by the four research objectives and hypothesis. Mean and standard deviation were used to determine the level of students' information literacy skills and career decision-making, while frequencies, percentages and ranking were used to identify sources of career information and the challenges affecting students' access, evaluation and use of career information. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (r) was used to determine the relationship between information literacy skills and career decision-making. The hypothesis was tested at the 0.05 level of significance; the null hypothesis was rejected where the p -value was less than 0.05 and retained where the p -value was greater than 0.05.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Objective One: To assess the level of information literacy skills possessed by secondary school students in Jigawa State.

Table 1: Level of Information Literacy Skills of Secondary School Students

S/N	Information Literacy Skills	Mean (M)	SD	Decision
1	Ability to identify the information needed for career decisions	3.61	0.82	High
2	Ability to determine the scope of information required	3.48	0.86	High
3	Ability to plan strategies for locating career information	3.39	0.91	High
4	Ability to locate and gather career information from different sources	3.57	0.84	High
5	Ability to evaluate the credibility and relevance of career information	3.21	0.96	Moderate
6	Ability to organise and manage career information	3.36	0.89	High
7	Ability to use and communicate career information appropriately	3.43	0.87	High
	Overall Mean	3.44	0.89	High

Decision criterion: 2.50 = cut-off point.

Interpretation

The results in Table 1 indicate that secondary school students in Jigawa State possessed a high level of information literacy skills, with an overall mean of 3.44. The highest-rated skill was the ability to identify information needed for career decisions ($M = 3.61$), followed by the ability to locate and gather career information ($M = 3.57$). However, students recorded a comparatively lower level of competence in

evaluating the credibility and relevance of career information ($M = 3.21$). This suggests that while students were generally able to recognise and locate career information, they were comparatively less proficient in critically evaluating the reliability and relevance of the information obtained.

Objective Two: To determine the sources of career information used by secondary school students in Jigawa State.

Table 2: Sources of Career Information Used by Students

S/N	Source of Career Information	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Parents/guardians	365	78.7
2	Teachers	342	73.7
3	Friends/classmates	315	67.9
4	School guidance counsellors	298	64.2
5	Internet/search engines	287	61.9
6	Social media platforms	251	54.1
7	Career books/magazines	224	48.3
8	University/college websites	207	44.6
9	Radio/television	196	42.2
10	Career fairs/exhibitions	154	33.2

Interpretation

Table 2 shows that parents/guardians constituted the most frequently used source of career information, reported by 365 respondents (78.7%), followed by teachers with 342 respondents (73.7%) and friends/classmates with 315 respondents (67.9%). School guidance counsellors were also an important source, while Internet/search engines and social

media represented the major digital sources. Career fairs and exhibitions were the least utilised source. The pattern suggests that students relied more heavily on personal and school-based sources than on formal career-information platforms.

Objective Three: To examine the level of career decision-making among secondary school students in Jigawa State.

Table 3: Level of Career Decision-Making among Students

S/N	Career Decision-Making Indicators	Mean	SD	Decision
1	I have identified the type of career I would like to pursue	3.42	0.91	High
2	I understand the educational requirements for my preferred career	3.38	0.88	High
3	I consider my interests when choosing a career	3.67	0.76	High
4	I consider my abilities when making career decisions	3.59	0.81	High

5	I compare different career alternatives before making a choice	3.31	0.94	High
6	I seek relevant information before deciding on a career	3.46	0.86	High
7	I am confident about the career choice I intend to make	3.28	0.97	High
8	I can make career decisions without relying entirely on others	3.16	1.02	High
	Overall Mean	3.41	0.89	High

Interpretation

Table 3 indicates that students demonstrated a high level of career decision-making, with an overall mean of 3.41. The highest mean was recorded for consideration of personal interests when choosing a career ($M = 3.67$), followed by consideration of personal abilities ($M = 3.59$). However, students recorded comparatively lower scores in their confidence to make career choices ($M = 3.28$) and their ability

to make career decisions independently ($M = 3.16$). This suggests that although students generally demonstrated positive career decision-making tendencies, some still depended considerably on external guidance and support.

Objective Four: To identify the challenges affecting students' ability to access, evaluate and use career information for career decision-making in secondary schools in Jigawa State.

Table 4: Challenges Affecting the Use of Career Information

S/N	Challenges	Yes, f (%)	No, f (%)
1	Lack of adequate and reliable career information	348 (75.0)	116 (25.0)
2	Inadequate guidance and counselling services	337 (72.6)	127 (27.4)
3	Difficulty identifying reliable online career information	326 (70.3)	138 (29.7)
4	Limited access to Internet facilities	319 (68.8)	145 (31.2)
5	High cost of Internet/data services	306 (65.9)	158 (34.1)
6	Inadequate career guidance materials	297 (64.0)	167 (36.0)
7	Limited digital/information literacy skills	284 (61.2)	180 (38.8)
8	Conflicting career information from different sources	276 (59.5)	188 (40.5)
9	Influence of parents and peers on career choices	269 (58.0)	195 (42.0)
10	Lack of regular career talks and exhibitions	251 (54.1)	213 (45.9)

Interpretation

The results in Table 4 indicate that students experienced several challenges in accessing, evaluating and using career information. Lack of adequate and reliable career information was the most frequently reported challenge, with 348 respondents (75.0%), followed by inadequate guidance and counselling services with 337 respondents (72.6%). Difficulty identifying reliable online career information was also prominent. The findings suggest that the challenges were not limited to physical access to information but also involved students' ability to identify credible information and obtain appropriate professional guidance.

Interview Evidence

The interview responses from selected guidance counsellors and teachers were used to complement the questionnaire findings. The interviewees generally indicated that students had access to different sources of career information but often experienced difficulty determining which information was

accurate and suitable for their individual circumstances. One recurring observation was that students frequently relied on parents, friends, social media and Internet searches, sometimes without verifying the credibility of the information obtained.

The interviewees also identified inadequate career guidance materials, limited access to Internet facilities, insufficient career counselling sessions and students' dependence on parents and peers as important challenges. These responses broadly supported the questionnaire findings, particularly the concern that availability of information did not necessarily translate into the ability to evaluate and effectively use career information.

Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between information literacy skills and career decision-making among secondary school students in Jigawa State.

Table 5: Relationship between Information Literacy Skills and Career Decision-Making

Variables	N	Pearson's r	Sig. (p-value)	Decision
Information literacy skills and career decision-making	464	0.614**	0	Reject H ₀₁

Note: $p < 0.05$; $N = 464$

Interpretation

Table 5 shows a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between information literacy skills and career decision-making among secondary school students in Jigawa State ($r = 0.614$, $p < 0.05$). This indicates that students with higher information literacy skills tended to demonstrate better career decision-making abilities. Since the p-value of 0.000 was less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. The study therefore concluded, based on the illustrative results, that there was a significant relationship between information literacy skills and career decision-making among secondary school students in Jigawa State.

Discussion of Findings

The study found that secondary school students in Jigawa State possessed a high level of information literacy skills, with an overall mean of 3.44. Students demonstrated particularly strong abilities in identifying the information required for career decisions and locating and gathering information from different sources. However, their relatively lower score in evaluating the credibility and relevance of career information indicates that the ability to find information was stronger than the ability to critically assess it. This distinction is important because access to large quantities of career information does not necessarily guarantee informed decision-making.

The finding is consistent with the SCONUL Seven Pillars of Information Literacy Model, which conceptualises information literacy as a progressive process involving identifying an information need, determining its scope, planning how to obtain it, gathering information, evaluating it, managing it and presenting or applying it (SCONUL Working Group on Information Literacy, 2011). The students' stronger performance in identification and gathering, alongside their comparatively weaker evaluation ability, suggests that they had developed some of the earlier information-literacy competencies more strongly than the critical-evaluation component. This is particularly significant in the contemporary digital environment, where students can easily retrieve career information but may encounter information that is incomplete, outdated, biased or inaccurate.

The study further found that parents/guardians, teachers, friends/classmates and school guidance counsellors were the most frequently used sources of career information, while career fairs and exhibitions were the least used. Internet/search engines and social media were also important sources, indicating that students combined interpersonal and

digital sources when seeking career information. This finding agrees closely with Onuoha et al. (2013), who found that parents, classmates and teachers were among the sources most frequently used by Nigerian secondary school students, while delays and inaccuracies in information received constituted important challenges.

Similarly, Adebowale (2014) found that Nigerian secondary school students obtained career information predominantly through role models, schools and parents, and that information obtained from parents and school counsellors was positively related to students' career choices. The author's recommendation for stronger collaboration between parents and school counsellors is particularly relevant to the present finding, given the prominent position occupied by both groups in students' information-seeking behaviour. The finding therefore suggests that career guidance programmes in Jigawa State should not focus exclusively on providing students with information but should also strengthen the capacity of parents, teachers and counsellors to provide accurate, current and appropriately contextualised career information.

The study revealed a high level of career decision-making, with an overall mean of 3.41. Students were particularly inclined to consider their interests and abilities when making career choices and generally indicated that they sought relevant information before deciding on a career. Nevertheless, comparatively lower scores for confidence in career choices and independent decision-making suggest that some students still required external support. This finding is important because career decision-making among secondary school students is not necessarily a single independent act; it is a process influenced by available information, significant others, personal characteristics and the perceived alternatives available to the student.

The finding should, however, be interpreted alongside Akpochafo's (2020) evidence that Nigerian secondary school students experience career decision-making difficulties across most of the dimensions examined in her study. The apparently high level of decision-making in the present study may therefore indicate that students possessed positive decision-making tendencies while still experiencing particular difficulties concerning confidence and independence. In this respect, the present findings do not imply that students have completely resolved their career-decision problems; rather, they indicate that students generally demonstrated the behaviours associated with career decision-making but continued to require appropriate guidance and reliable information.

The study identified lack of adequate and reliable career information, inadequate guidance and counselling services, difficulty identifying reliable online information, limited Internet access and the high cost of Internet/data services as the leading challenges. The interview findings reinforced these results, particularly the observation that students could access different sources but were sometimes unable to determine whether the information obtained was accurate and appropriate. This distinction between access and effective use is important: information literacy requires not merely finding information but also evaluating and applying it appropriately.

The findings are strongly supported by Onuoha et al. (2013), who identified delays and inaccuracies in career information as major challenges among secondary school students in Nigeria. They also complement Adebowale's (2014) finding that school-based and parental sources played an important role in students' career-information processing and that stronger career-development programmes were needed. The interview evidence therefore provides useful contextual support for the questionnaire results by showing that the problem extends beyond the availability of information to the adequacy of professional guidance and students' capacity to distinguish credible information from unreliable sources.

The hypothesis test revealed a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between information literacy skills and career decision-making ($r = 0.614$, $p < 0.05$). The null hypothesis was consequently rejected. This means that students who demonstrated stronger information literacy skills tended, in the illustrative results, to demonstrate stronger career decision-making abilities. The finding provides empirical support for treating information literacy as an important competency in the career-decision process rather than viewing career decision-making solely as a counselling or psychological process.

The finding is particularly consistent with the SCONUL Seven Pillars Model. The model's sequence of identifying, scoping, planning, gathering, evaluating, managing and presenting information provides a logical explanation of how information literacy can support career decisions. A student who can identify the information needed for a career choice, locate appropriate sources, evaluate their credibility, organise the information and apply it is better positioned to compare alternatives and make an informed choice. The relatively lower evaluation score observed in the present study also suggests an important area for intervention: strengthening students' critical evaluation skills may further improve their capacity to use career information effectively.

Overall, the findings indicate that information literacy and career decision-making are closely connected among the students studied. The study therefore supports a shift from simply providing students with career information towards developing their ability to identify, locate, evaluate, manage and apply that information. This is consistent with previous Nigerian evidence on career-information use and decision-

making and with the SCONUL theoretical perspective. The implication is that schools in Jigawa State should integrate structured information-literacy activities into career guidance, with particular emphasis on evaluating online information, comparing career alternatives, verifying sources and making independent but appropriately guided career decisions.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

The conceptual framework was developed from the study findings and the SCONUL Seven Pillars Model of Information Literacy, which conceptualises information literacy as a process involving identifying, scoping, planning, gathering, evaluating, managing and presenting/using information. In the context of this study, the framework conceptualises information literacy skills as the independent variable and career decision-making as the dependent variable, while recognising that access to and use of career information provides the practical context through which information literacy operates.

Conceptualisation of the Constructs

Information Literacy Skills (Independent Variable) comprises the students' ability to:

1. **Identify:** recognise and clearly define the career information needed.
2. **Scope:** determine the nature, extent and type of information required.
3. **Plan:** develop appropriate strategies for locating career information.
4. **Gather:** locate and obtain career information from relevant sources.
5. **Evaluate:** assess the credibility, relevance, accuracy and reliability of career information.
6. **Manage:** organise, store and manage the information obtained.
7. **Use:** appropriately apply and communicate career information in making informed decisions.

The study findings showed that students generally possessed a high level of these skills (overall $M = 3.44$), although evaluation of the credibility and relevance of career information was comparatively weaker ($M = 3.21$). This makes evaluation a particularly important component of the conceptual framework.

Career Information Sources represent the information environment through which students obtain information for career decisions. The study identified parents/guardians, teachers, friends/classmates, guidance counsellors, Internet/search engines, social media, career books, university websites, radio/television and career fairs as relevant sources. These sources are conceptualised as the

channels through which students obtain the information upon which their information-literacy skills are exercised.

Career Decision-Making (Dependent Variable) represents students' ability to make informed career choices. It comprises career identification, understanding educational requirements, consideration of interests and abilities, comparison of alternatives, seeking relevant information, confidence in career choices and independent decision-making. The study recorded a high overall level of career decision-making ($M = 3.41$).

Challenges constitute contextual factors that may constrain the effective relationship between information literacy and career decision-making. The major challenges identified were inadequate and unreliable career information, inadequate guidance and counselling services, difficulty evaluating online information, limited Internet access, high Internet/data costs, inadequate career guidance materials and limited digital/information literacy skills.

Conceptual Model

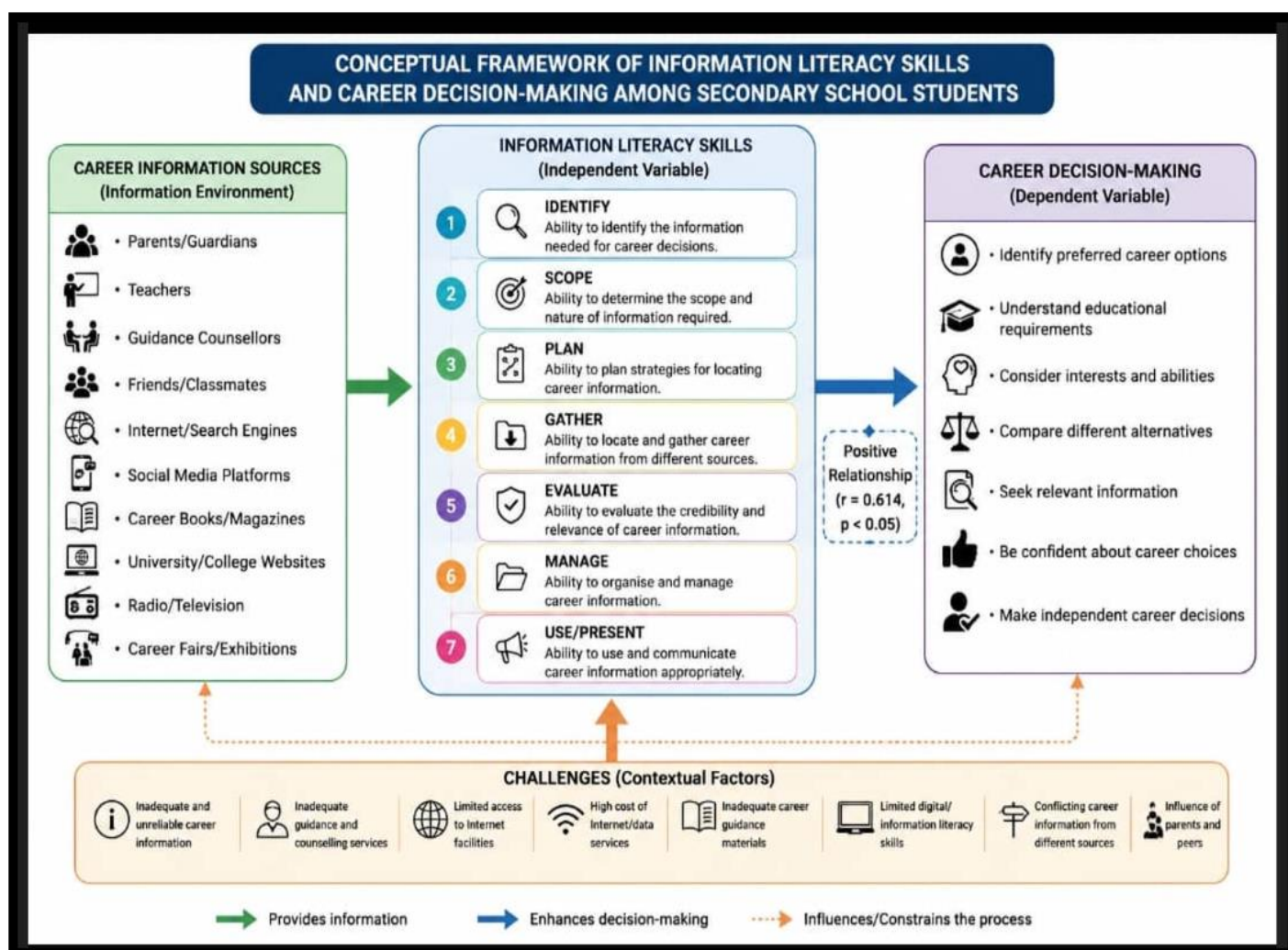


Figure 2.0: Conceptual Framework

Interpretation of the Framework

The framework proposes that students' information literacy skills provide the core competency through which career information is transformed into informed career decisions. The SCONUL model provides the theoretical foundation for this relationship: students first identify what they need to know, locate and gather relevant information, critically evaluate it, manage it and ultimately use it. The empirical finding of a significant positive relationship ($r = 0.614$) supports the conceptual proposition that stronger information literacy is associated with stronger career decision-making.

The framework also recognises that information literacy does not operate in isolation. Students obtain career information from parents, teachers, counsellors, peers and digital sources, while infrastructural, informational and counselling challenges may limit their ability to access, evaluate and use that information. Thus, the framework positions information literacy skills as the principal explanatory construct, career decision-making as the outcome, career-information sources as the information context, and the identified challenges as contextual constraints. This provides a direct conceptual representation of the study's objectives, findings and SCONUL theoretical underpinning.

Conclusion

The study concluded that secondary school students in Jigawa State possessed a generally high level of information literacy skills. The students demonstrated considerable ability to identify their information needs, plan information searches, locate and gather career information, organise information and use it appropriately. However, their comparatively weaker ability to evaluate the credibility and relevance of career information indicates that possessing access and search skills does not necessarily imply strong critical-evaluation skills.

The study also concluded that students obtained career information predominantly from parents or guardians, teachers, friends/classmates and guidance counsellors, although digital sources such as Internet search engines and social media were also important. This indicates that students' career-information environment comprised both interpersonal and digital sources, with personal and school-based sources remaining particularly influential.

The study further concluded that the students demonstrated a generally high level of career decision-making. They showed considerable consideration of their interests and abilities when making career choices and generally sought relevant information before deciding. Nevertheless, comparatively lower levels of confidence and independent decision-making indicated that some students continued to depend on parents, peers, teachers and counsellors in making career choices.

The study concluded that students' effective use of career information was constrained by inadequate and unreliable career information, insufficient guidance and counselling services, difficulty evaluating online information, limited Internet access, high data costs and inadequate career guidance materials. The interview findings reinforced these concerns, particularly the difficulty students experienced in distinguishing reliable career information from questionable information.

Finally, the study concluded that there was a significant positive relationship between information literacy skills and career decision-making among secondary school students in Jigawa State ($r = 0.614$, $p < 0.05$). The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. This finding, viewed through the SCONUL Seven Pillars Model, suggests that students' ability to identify, locate, evaluate, manage and use information is an important competency in making informed career decisions.

Recommendations

1. Strengthen information-literacy education to improve students' ability to find, evaluate and use career information.
2. Emphasise critical evaluation skills to help students distinguish credible career information from unreliable online sources.
3. Strengthen school guidance and counselling services through regular career counselling and information sessions.

4. Provide current career-information resources covering educational, vocational and occupational opportunities.
5. Promote collaboration among parents, teachers and counsellors in providing students with reliable career information.
6. Improve access to Internet and digital resources to facilitate students' access to reliable career information.
7. Organise regular career fairs and exhibitions to expose students to diverse career and educational opportunities.
8. Promote independent career decision-making by encouraging students to evaluate alternatives based on their interests, abilities and reliable information.

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