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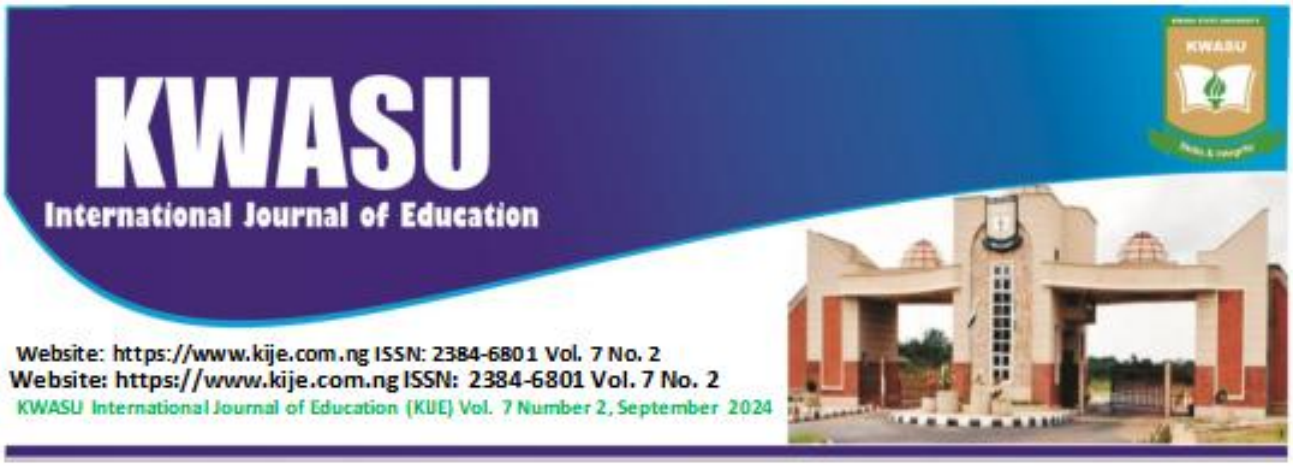
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DIGITAL LITERACY, ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND SKILL ACQUISITION OF BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN KADUNA STATE, NIGERIA

Dr. J. S. Mamman, M. A. JIMOH

Abstract

Skill acquisition has been a major challenge in the 21st century for business education students to an extent that employers are complaining that graduates do not possess requisite skills to make them functional. It is in line with that this study was conducted to examine digital literacy, academic performance and skill acquisition of business education students in tertiary institutions in Kaduna State, Nigeria. The study stated two specific purposes which are to determine the extent of influence of digital literacy on Business Education Students' academic performance, and communication skills. Two research questions and two null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised 1,161 lecturers and students in Business education departments in the tertiary institutions in Kaduna State. The Research Advisor Table was used to select a sample of 290 respondents. The proportionate sampling technique was used to select the respondents. Influence of Digital Literacy on Business Education Students Academic Performance and Skill Acquisition Questionnaire (IDLBESAPSAQ) contained 20 items was used to collect data. The instrument was validated by three experts and a Cronbach alpha reliability co-efficient of 0.87 was calculated for the instrument. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while independent samples t-test statistic was the tool used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that there was no significant difference between lecturers and students' responses regarding academic performance

(t=1.753;df=288;p>0.05) and communication skills (t=1.930;df=288;p>0.05). The study concludes that digital literacy has significant influence on academic performance and skill acquisition. Based on the findings and conclusions of the study it was recommended that the management of tertiary institutions should promote and encourage teachers and students to use relevant digital technologies to acquire communication skills.

Introduction

Institutions of higher education are considered as the dominant agents of development in the society. The main goal of tertiary institutions is to help in the growth of the nation by providing high and skillful human resources which is compulsory for the development of the country. These goals can be achieved through programs of education, research, and communal studying. This places tertiary education at the upper level in the rank of the educational system as outlined for accommodating knowledge, obtaining, and making discoveries. In general, education as a critical component of a country's human capital increases the efficiency of each worker and helps economies to move up the value chain beyond manual tasks or simple production processes. Human capital has long been considered the most distinctive feature of the economic system and further empirical work has proven the impact of education on productivity.

In a fast-changing world shaped by the advancement of information and communication technology (ICT), it has become imperative to learn, acquire, and utilize new skills to effectively harness available opportunities and contribute meaningfully to any chosen field of endeavor. This is an obvious reality for 21st-century undergraduate students of any academic discipline in general and Business Education, in particular. This fact builds on the premise that effective education is no longer measured by the literacy of reading and writing, but indisputably a blend of other literacy including information literacy, digital literacy, and many other competencies. This has led to the use of several different terms, such as skills, competence, literacy, knowledge, and fluency, to refer to digital abilities. Over the last two decades, educational researchers and Higher Education institutions have explored how digital literacy could support teaching and learning, allowing students to meet 21st century challenges. Digital literacy could be defined as the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed for the use of technology in the context of a discipline or subject.

Digital literacy refers to the ability to process information using digital technology in a multi-modal environment. More specifically, digital literacy can be defined as "the capacity to consume and comprehend media (text, sound, and images), replicate data and visuals through digital modification, and assess and use new information obtained from digital settings.". (Kaeophanuek, Na-Songkhla & Nilsook, 2018: 2).

Academic performance is a multidimensional construct comprising the skills, attitudes, and behavior of a learner that contribute to academic success in the classroom. Academic performance by students has always been a subject of interest to every educational institution. Whereas there is a consensus that schools should play a major role in this process, there seems to be disagreement about what exactly that role should be. While some believe that the primary focus of schools should be the academic preparation of students, others believe that efforts of schools should be integrated with other social institutions such as family and community towards educating children (Hutt, 2017). Heads of educational institutions, teachers, and parents are primarily responsible for students' academic performance. Academic performance refers to how

students deal with their studies and how they cope with or accomplish different tasks given to them by their teachers (Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010). Digital literacy can therefore have important effects on academic, skills acquisition, and labor market outcomes. Quite surprisingly, however, while there is abundant evidence about the effects on educational outcomes of computer ownership or computer use, relatively little evidence is available about the effects of digital literacy. The influence of digital technology on our educational system cannot be overemphasized. Hardly can any undergraduate student survive in a tertiary institution without basic skills and knowledge of digital technology. The composite skill required for a student to fit into a digital environment in achieving his/her academic pursuit is digital literacy skill.

Academic instruction is arguably the primary business of education. To this end, schools are expected to influence students' learning, socialization, and even vocational preparedness. Despite the attention paid to a broad definition of educational outcomes, however, academic performance remains central. Students' academic performance is a term that appears frequently in higher education discourse. Academic performance is a multifaceted concept consisting of a learner's abilities, attitudes, and behaviors that support academic achievement in the classroom. It is a satisfactory and superior level of performance for students as they progress through and complete their school experience. Students of higher institutions cannot achieve higher academic excellence without effective communication and effective communication cannot be achieved without having the skill for communicating with others.

Communication skills are those skills needed to speak and write properly. Effective speaking is typically defined as being able to communicate effectively while maintaining eye contact with the audience, using a wide variety of terminology, and articulating speech to meet the needs of that audience (Odu, 2018). Similarly, an effective writer should be able to use written words in various styles and techniques to communicate his/her message and ideas to the readers. One should have the ability to listen carefully and write and speak clearly in any situation. Therefore, good reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills are essential for effective communication.

There is little doubt that the level of performance that can be achieved when acquiring skills is closely related to the extent to which a person practices the skill. Researchers often use retention or transfer tests to determine whether the changes in performance caused by practice are temporary or permanent. In educational institutions, academic performance is the outcome of educational goals that are achieved either by students or the teacher, which is how well a student meets standards set out by local authority or the institution itself.

Debates about students' gender-related performance in business education have taken place globally, although the results have been disputed (Stoet & Geary, 2013). Gender is a variable to be tested in this study. It has been observed that male students outperform their female counterparts in business education. The greatest difference in performance between male and female students was exhibited in digital literacy reasoning and skill acquisition; this follows because male students display greater confidence in their reasoning skills, which is a strong predictor of literacy performance. Thorough studies such as Else-Quest, Hyde, and Linn (2010) and Linderberg, Hyde, Petersen, and Linn (2014) reported that gender disparities are decreasing, as both men and women perform comparably. This view is supported by the America Psychological Association (APA) (2014) and Alex and Mammen (2015) who claimed that there is no appreciable statistical difference between male and female students' performance in business education globally. Yet, gender differences in business education and other social sciences continue to exist in some countries like Ghana, Kenya, and South Africa. Cases where

females dominate their male counterparts in terms of performance in business education are rare. Many factors (not fully discussed in this study) given by researchers are reported to be responsible for the dominance of males in business education including gender imbalance, task difficulty, cognitive competence, and perceived negative attitude toward female students by their teacher among others.

Technology and educational materials can be used by lecturers to improve skill acquisition. To give students more opportunities to practice and hone their skills, teachers can combine multimedia presentations, online tutorials, interactive software, virtual simulations, and educational websites. Lecturers can assist students in making the most of these tools to enhance their education (Sharpe, 2010). It is known that they are either false or, more generally, donot include enough information (Litt, 2013). It is against this background that the study was conducted to determine the perceived influence of digital literacy on business education students' academic performance and skill acquisition in tertiary institutions.

Statement of Problem

Digital literacy skills are fundamental skills for high academic performance and professional effectiveness in today's global academic system. It eases the difficulties associated with accessing and utilizing electronic information resources, which have become a preference for successful learning and research in educational institutions in developed countries of the world. The opposite is nearly true in poor nations like Nigeria, where the use of ICT in the teaching and learning process is still in its infancy and lecturers have little to no digital literacy expertise (Ebele, Ejedafiru & Oghenetega, 2013). This is having an adverse effect on the overall educational development of tertiary institution students as higher education is the apex educational level in building a literate individual that will in-turn transform the society into a literate society.

Despite the immense value of digital literacy, a majority of business education students in Nigeria lack the necessary skills since there is still a dearth of access to and adoption of digital tools at many of the country's tertiary institutions, this is in the view of the researcher. Most Nigerian educational institutions' curricula continue to place greater emphasis on analog or traditional teaching methods than on digital technology applications (Asanbe, Zamani &Aiyedogun 2008). Most students of Business Education do not have access to digital technology gadgets like computer systems, networks, and the internet, among others.

From the researchers' view, some students of Business Education do not show serious interest in digital technology-related courses, which will facilitate their digital literacy skills. This often is due to some ineffective teaching styles by some IT instructors/lecturers. The most disheartening scenarios in many Nigerian tertiary institutions that are observed to hamper students of Business Education for digital literacy skills in utilizing electronic information resources include lack of internet facilities, epileptic power supply, and non-functional or unusable digital tools such as computers in the tertiary institution's libraries. Additionally, most students of Business Education are technophobic in their approach to digital technology applications for academic dealings. Overall, the absence of a study on the influence of digital literacy on Business education students' academic performance would impede students understanding, hinder curriculum development, limit guidance for educators, and potentially leave students unprepared for the digital demands of the business world. It is crucial to conduct research in this area to elevate educational practices and ensure students receive the necessary digital literacy skills to succeed. There are a few studies on digital literacy, but to the best knowledge of the researcher, no study focused on digital literacy with communication skills.

This becomes the gap that this study filled with empirical evidence of the perceived influence of digital literacy on business education students' academic performance and skill acquisition in tertiary institutions.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

i. What is the extent of the influence of digital literacy on Business Education Students' academic performance?
ii. What is the extent of influence of digital literacy on Business Education Students' communication skills?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated for this study and was tested at 0.05 level of significance:

$H_0$1: There is no significant difference between the mean response scores of male and female respondents regarding the influence of digital literacy on business education students' academic performance in tertiary institutions.

$H_0$2: There is no significant difference between the mean response scores of lecturers and students regarding the perceived influence of digital literacy on business education students' communication skills in tertiary institutions.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of this study comprised undergraduate students of business education departments and lecturers from tertiary institutions located in Kaduna State Nigeria. The total population of both students and lecturers is 1,161 (Source: Departmental Office of each Institution (2024). Proportionate sampling technique and Research Advisor (2006) were employed to obtain the sample size of two hundred and ninety (290) respondents. The instrument for data collection was a 20 item-structured questionnaire titled "Influence of Digital Literacy on Business Education Students Academic Performance and Skill Acquisition Questionnaire (IDLBESAPSAQ)'. The instrument provided response to the two research questions. Item 1-10 dealt with research question one, and item 11 – 20 dealt with research question 2 in a 4-point rating scale of 'Very High Extent (4), High Extent (3), Low Extent (2), and Very Low Extent (1). To establish the validity of the instrument, the questionnaire was subjected to face and content validity by three experts, two from the Department of Business and Entrepreneurship Education, and one Professor from Department of Educational Management, Kwara State University, Malete. To ensure the consistency of the instrument, the Cronbach Alpha method of reliability was adopted in establishing a reliability coefficient of 0.87. Out of the 333 copies of questionnaires that were administered only 316 were retrieved and used for the study. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while the independent sample t-test statistics was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The mean score of 1 Very Low Extent: 1.00 – 1.74, Low Extent: 1.75 – 2.49, High Extent: 2.50 – 3.24, Very High Extent: 3.25 – 4.00. Also, the decision rules for the hypotheses was that when the observed probability value is greater than or equal to 0.05 level of significance, the hypothesis was rejected and if it's value is less than the Table valve, the hypothesis is accepted.

Results

Analysis of Data to Answer the Research Questions:

Analysis of data to answer the research questions are presented in Table 5 to 9 as follows:

Research Question One: What is the extent of the influence of digital literacy on business education students' academic performance in tertiary Institution in Kaduna State?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of responses on digital literacy and Business Education Students' academic performance in tertiary Institutions

S/N	STATEMENT	$\overline{X}$	SD	Remark
1.	Digital resources such as online databases and e-books positively influence students' academic performance in business education courses.	1.73	.461	**Low Extent**
2.	Proficiency in digital tools have improve students research skills and positively impacted their academic achievements in business education.	1.73	.461	**Low Extent**
3.	Integrating digital literacy skills into the curriculum for business education students is crucial to enhancing overall academic performance.	1.72	.448	**Low Extent**
4.	Students engage frequently in online networking for professional development activities related to field of business education.	1.91	.672	**Low Extent**
5.	Digital literacy skills provide students with a competitive advantage in accessing and applying industry-relevant information in my coursework.	1.96	.722	**Low Extent**
6.	Students proficiency in digital presentation tools (e.g., PowerPoint) positively influences their success in 1delivering presentations for business education courses.	1.77	.424	**Low Extent**
7.	Digital literacy has significantly impacted students ability to critically evaluate information from online sources for academic assignments.	1.87	.553	**Low Extent**
8	Engaging in online discussions or forums related to my business education coursework is beneficial to students academic performance.	1.78	.457	**Low Extent**
9	Digital literacy, including email and virtual meetings, contribute to effective collaboration with peers and instructors in my business education program.	1.75	.520	**Low Extent**
10	Students feel confident in using business-related software for academic tasks, such as accounting software and project management tools.	1.86	.635	**Low Extent**
Weighted Average		**1.81**	**.540**	**Low Extent**

Analysis of data in Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of responses on the extent of the influence of the digital literacy on Business Education Students' academic performance in tertiary institution. The Table reveals that the respondents indicate that digital resources such as online databases and e-books positively influence students' academic performance in business education courses is to a low extent (Mean= 1.73). In addition,

proficiency in digital tools have improved students research skills and positively impacted their academic achievements in business education, integrating digital literacy skills into the curriculum for business education students is crucial to enhancing overall academic performance are to a low extent (mean = 1.73 and 1.72 respectively). Also, students engage frequently in online networking for professional development activities related to field of business education, students proficiency in digital presentation tool (e.g. PowerPoint) positively influences their success in delivering presentations for business education courses are to a low extent (mean = 1.91, 1.96 and 1.77 respectively). Additionally, Digital literacy has significantly impacted students' ability to critically evaluate information from online sources for academic assignments, engaging in online discussions or forums related to business education coursework is beneficial to students' academic performance, digital literacy, including email and virtual meetings, (mean = 1.87, 1.78, 1.75, and 1.86 respectively). All the ten item constructs have standard deviation ranging from .461,.448,.672,.722,.424,.553,.457,.520,.635 and .540. This means that the responses of the respondents are widespread as they are not close to the mean. Table 3 shows a grand total calculated weighted mean and standard deviation of 1.81 and .540. All the constructs in Table 1 indicate that digital literacy has no influence on business education male and female respondents' academic performance are to a low extent (mean = 1.81, SD = .540).

Research Question Two: What is the extent of the influence of the digital literacy on Business Education Students Communication skills in tertiary institution in Kaduna State?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of responses on digital literacy and Business Education Students Communication skills in tertiary institutions

S/N	STATEMENT	$\overline{X}$	SD	Remark
1.	Students proficiency in digital tools has enhanced their effectiveness in digital communication (e.g., emails, virtual meetings) for academic purposes.	1.90	.696	**Low Extent**
2.	Digital literacy skills contribute to effective collaboration with peers and instructors in their business education program.	1.88	.576	**Low Extent**
3.	Students digital literacy has significantly influenced the quality of their written communication in academic assignments and reports.	1.87	.687	**Low Extent**
4.	Digital literacy has positively influenced students verbal communication skills, including participation in class discussions and presentations.	1.89	.642	**Low Extent**
5.	Digital literacy has increased students confidence in participating in digital communication activities for academic purposes.	1.90	.701	**Low Extent**
6.	Engaging in online discussions or forums related to business education coursework is beneficial to students communication skills.	1.84	.524	**Low Extent**
7.	Digital literacy significantly influences students ability to communicate professionally, both in academic and future professional contexts.	1.84	.639	**Low Extent**
8	Digital literacy skills positively impact students ability to	1.83	.590	**Low Extent**

	work effectively in virtual teams for academic projects.			
9	Students proficiency in digital presentation tools (e.g., PowerPoint) has enhanced their skills in delivering academic presentations.	1.70	.528	**Low Extent**
10	Student digital literacy skills have significantly contributed to the improvement of their written/ oral communication skills in my business education studies.	1.81	.539	**Low Extent**
Weighted Average		**1.85**	**.612**	**Low Extent**

Analysis of data in Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation of responses on the extent of the influence of the digital literacy on Business Education Students' communication skills in tertiary institution. The Table reveals that the respondents indicate that digital resources such as online databases and e-books positively influence students' proficiency in digital tools has enhanced their effectiveness in digital communication (e.g. emails and virtual meetings) for academic purposes, digital literacy skills contribute to effective collaboration with peers and instructors in business education program are to a low extent (Mean= 1.90 and 1.88 respectively). In addition, students' digital literacy has significantly influenced the quality of written communication in academic assignments and reports, digital literacy has positively influenced students' verbal communication skills including participation in class discussions and presentations, digital literacy increased students' confidence in participating in digital communication activities for academic purposes are to a low extent (mean = 1.87, 1.89 and 1.90 respectively). Also, students engage in online discussions or forums related to business education coursework being beneficial to students' communication skills, students' proficiency in digital presentation tools (e.g. Powerpoint) has enhanced their skills in delivering academic presentations and student digital literacy skills have significantly contributed to the improvement of written and oral communication skills in business education studies are to a low extent (mean = 1.84, 1.84, 1.83, 1.70 and 1.81 respectively). All the ten item constructs have standard deviation ranging from .696, .576, .687, .642, .701, .524, .639, .590, .528, and .539. This means that the responses of the respondents are widespread as they are not close to the mean. Table 2 shows a grand total calculated weighted mean and standard deviation of 1.84 and .612. All the constructs in Table 6 indicate that digital literacy has no influence on business education lecturers and students' communication skills and are to a low extent (mean = 1.84, SD = .612).

Testing Hypotheses

Research Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference between the mean response scores of male and female respondents regarding the influence of digital literacy on business education students' academic performance in tertiary institutions in Kaduna State.

Table 3: Summary of t-test Analysis on the significant difference between the mean response scores of male and female respondents regarding the influence of digital literacy on business education students' academic performance

Gender	n	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Df	Sig.	Remark
Male	109	18.73	4.451	1.753	288	.081	Not Significant
Female	181	17.68	5.244				

Source: Field Survey 2024

Data in Table 3 shows significance difference between the mean response scores of male and female respondents regarding the influence of digital literacy on business education students' academic performance in tertiary institutions in Kaduna State. The finding revealed that there was no significant difference ($t = 1.753$; $df = 288$; $P > 0.05$). The hypothesis was therefore not rejected in the light of the result since the significant value is less than 0.05. This implies that there was no significant difference between the mean response scores of male and female respondents regarding the influence of digital literacy on business education students' academic performance in tertiary institutions in Kaduna State.

Research Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference between the mean response scores of lecturers and students regarding the perceived influence of digital literacy on business education students' communication skills in tertiary institutions in Kaduna State.

Table 4: Summary of t-test Analysis on thesignificant difference between the mean response scores of lecturers and students regarding the perceived influence of digital literacy on business education students' communication skills

Respondents	n	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Df	Sig.	Remark
Male	109	19.31	5.410	1.930	288	.055	Not Significant
Female	181	17.97	5.942				

Source: Field Survey 2024

Data in Table 4 shows there was no significance difference between the mean response scores of lecturers and students regarding the perceived influence of digital literacy on business education students' communication skills in tertiary institutions in Kaduna State. The finding revealed that there was no significant difference ($t = 1.930$; $df = 288$; $P > 0.05$). The hypothesis was therefore not rejected in the light of the result since the significant value is greater than 0.05. This implies that there was no significant difference between the mean response scores of male and female regarding the perceived influence of digital literacy on business education students' communication skills in tertiary institutions in Kaduna State.

Discussion of Findings

The study focused on the perceived influence of digital literacy on business education students' academic performance and skill acquisition in tertiary institutions in Kaduna State. The result of the analysis in Table 1 revealed that the influence of digital literacy on Business Education Students academic performance in tertiary institution is to a low extent as the weighted mean of 1.81 was given. The result of the first research hypothesis revealed that there was no significant difference between the mean response scores of male and female respondents regarding the influence of digital literacy on business education students' academic performance in tertiary institutions in Kaduna State ($t = 1.753$; $df = 288$; $P > 0.05$).These findings have supported the results of previous research by Hasanah and Setiaji (2019) that digital literacy on entrepreneurial intentions has a positive effect. Likewise with the results of Stoke's (2008) study which states that digital literacy is the knowledge and skills to utilize a variety of digital resources to support their activities as learners. Also, Negi and Sain (2023) stated that Digital literacy is essential for the well-being of students in today's technologically advanced environment. Students must be educated properly so that they have the necessary skills to successfully complete their higher education learning journey. The finding is also in line with Eliaet al. (2020) stated that the ability to use technology would propel students to be able to innovate their business ideas.

The result of the study as shown in Table 2 shows a weighted mean of 1.85, indicating that the influence of digital literacy on Business Education Students Communication skills in tertiary institution is to a very low extent. The second research hypothesis shows that there was no significant difference between the mean response scores of lecturers and students regarding the perceived influence of digital literacy on business education students' communication skills in tertiary institutions ($t = 1.930$; $df = 288$; $P > 0.05$). This finding indicated that the possession of digital communication skills will increase the entrepreneurial desires of business education students. This finding is in line with Lifintsev et al. (2022) who reported that students' digital communication skills could impact their entrepreneurial intentions. In the same vein, Seroka-Stolka and Tomski (2014) stated that digital communication offers significant tools that help aspiring entrepreneurs connect with both domestic and international contacts and quickly obtain the information they need.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was therefore concluded that digital literacy has significant influence on academic performance and skill acquisition. This means that when students are digital literate chances are that they will perform well and they will acquire the necessary skills and if this is the case, it means that teaching without digital technologies will not help these students continuous teaching without digital literacy means that our students will continue to go about with poor academic performance and lack of skills which also means that we will just be turning out half-baked graduates who will find it difficult to get job or to be self employed. By actively using digital tools, students develop proficiency in navigating technology, utilizing digital resources, and effectively leveraging digital tools for various business purposes. Students gain hands-on experience in using data analysis software, project management platforms, digital marketing tools, and other digital resources commonly used in the workplace. This proficiency enables students to be more efficient, productive, and adaptable in their future

careers. By developing digital literacy skills, students gain proficiency in utilizing digital tools, navigating online resources, and effectively engaging with digital technologies.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The Management of the tertiary institutions should promote the use of digital resources like android phones, laptops, palmtops, tablets and tools among teachers and students so that they will be digital literate which will in turn improve their academic performance.
2. The Management of the tertiary institutions should promote and encourage teachers and students to use relevant digital technologies to acquire communication skills.

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