The Role Of Information Institutions In Knowledge Empowerment And National Development In The Kingdom Of Saudi Arabia

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Abstract
The study aimed to measure the role of information institutions in empowering knowledge and supporting national development in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It relied on a field approach to studying the phenomenon, using a questionnaire to collect data. The questionnaire was distributed to a random sample of female students in the Information Science Department, representing 102 responses. The study yielded several results, including: Regular library use was reported by 51% of participants. Academic motives dominated library use (research: 49.5%, reading: 31%). Participants recognized libraries' role in developing and promoting intellectual skills (94.1%). The study also presented several recommendations, including: Organize cultural and social programs to increase engagement, Foster collaboration with government and academic institutions, Provide ongoing staff training in modern technologies, Align content and services with national and sustainable development goals, Encourage and support student-led research initiatives aligned with Vision 2030, and Ensure sustainable government funding for public and academic institutions .
Keywords: Information Institutions, Knowledge Empowerment, National Development, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, A Field Study, the Perspective of Undergraduate, Information Science Students

INTRODUCTION

Information institutions are vital cultural and scientific entities within society, serving as a nexus between knowledge, researchers, and the broader community. In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, these institutions play a pivotal role in supporting national development across various educational, cultural, and social sectors by providing access to information resources and

educational materials. These efforts contribute to enhancing education, scientific research, and cultural awareness while deepening national identity. Over recent years, information institutions in the Kingdom have witnessed significant advancements in technology and service provision, enabling them to meet the evolving needs of Saudi society amid major national transformations(Awad, 2010).

The problem this study

addresses lies in exploring the role of information institutions in supporting and developing Saudi society, analyzing their impact on education and research, and evaluating their contribution to cultural awareness and sustainable development.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research holds particular importance in light of Saudi Vision 2030, which emphasizes education enhancement and the development of a knowledge-based economy. Information institutions contribute to these objectives by offering access to knowledge and research resources. This study aims to deepen the understanding of the role of information institutions in national development.

Research Questions

− What is the role of information institutions in knowledge empowerment and national development?

− What initiatives and partnerships do these institutions implement to support knowledge empowerment and national development in Saudi Arabia?

− What challenges do information institutions face in promoting knowledge and achieving national development?

Objectives of the Study

− To identify the role of information institutions in empowering knowledge and supporting national development.

− To assess the availability of initiatives and partnerships undertaken by information institutions to achieve these goals.

− To highlight the challenges faced by information institutions from the perspective of undergraduate students.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a field-based methodology commonly used in social sciences to analyze phenomena deeply within their real-world context. It includes detailed investigation and comprehensive analysis, using surveys as the primary data collection tool alongside document analysis and other methods.

Research Tools

The study employed a structured questionnaire containing interconnected questions designed to achieve the research goals.

Population and Sample

The sample consisted of 102 randomly selected female undergraduate students enrolled in the Department of Information Science.

Scope of the Study
Topical Scope: Measuring the role of information institutions in knowledge empowerment and national development in Saudi Arabia.
Spatial Scope: Department of Information Science.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Literature Review: The Role of Information Institutions in Enabling Knowledge and National Development in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
1. Theoretical Framework: Information Institutions and Sustainable Development
Information institutions, such as public and academic libraries, are a key pillar in supporting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by enhancing access to information, providing learning environments, and empowering communities. In Nigeria, for example, studies have shown that public libraries contribute to achieving the SDGs by promoting digital inclusion, offering information literacy programs, and supporting lifelong learning. (Igbinovia ,2016) also noted that libraries are a means of achieving the SDGs by providing community-oriented information services.
2. The Saudi Context: Information Institutions and Saudi Vision 2030
In May 2021, the Saudi Libraries Authority launched a strategy for developing the library sector, aiming to transform libraries from mere information repositories to comprehensive cultural platforms. This strategy seeks to promote reading, disseminate knowledge, and increase information literacy, in line with the objectives of the Ministry of Culture and Saudi Vision 2030. Initiatives associated with this strategy include programs to enhance skills, ensure lifelong learning, foster innovation, and facilitate international knowledge exchange (Alex-Nmecha,2020).
3. Research Gap: The Need for Field Studies in the Saudi Context
While previous studies highlight the importance of information institutions in supporting sustainable development, most focus on theoretical analysis or case studies in other countries such as Nigeria and the UAE. These studies demonstrate that libraries contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by providing information services, supporting education, and enhancing community awareness. However, there is a lack of field studies that measure the actual impact of information institutions in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the current study aims to fill this gap through a field analysis of the role of information institutions in enabling knowledge and national development in Saudi Arabia, with a focus on both the local and developmental dimensions(Igbinovia,2023).
The Role of Information Institutions in National Development
Information institutions cooperate with governmental bodies to support development plans and enhance the societal information infrastructure. This includes:
– Resource Sharing: Promoting broader access and reducing duplication.
– Policy Support: Assisting policymakers and researchers with data for developmental decisions.
– Infrastructure Development: Updating systems and integrating modern technologies for better service delivery.
Research Skills and Academic Empowerment
Developing research and academic skills among students plays a foundational role in achieving national development. According to(El-Sayed ,2020) key benefits include:

- Enhanced critical and analytical thinking.
- Improved academic performance and scholarly output.
- Increased self-confidence and intellectual independence.
- Readiness for the job market.
- Broader engagement with diverse academic sources.
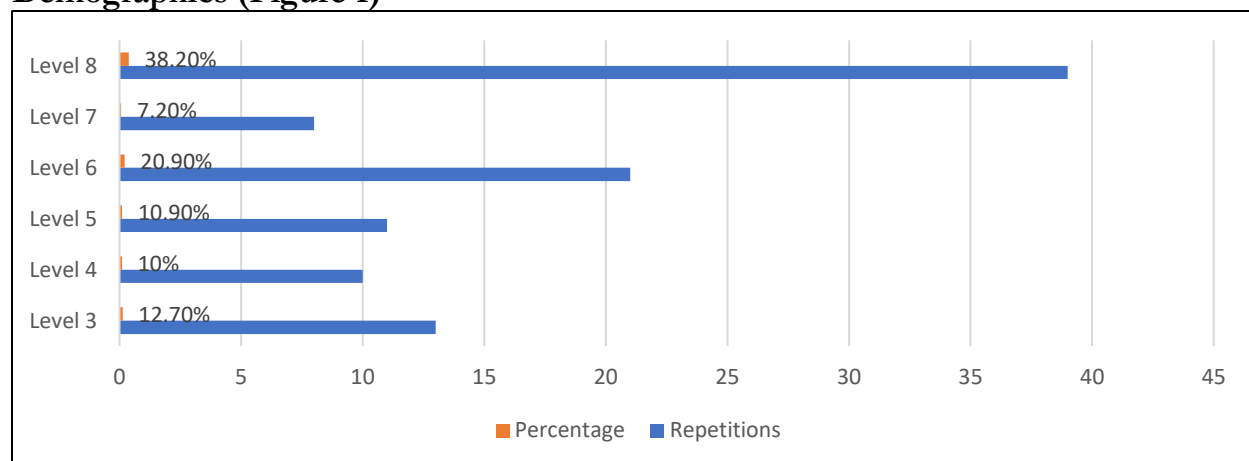- Strengthened student-teacher interaction.

Challenges Facing Information Institutions

Based on(Hassan ,2020) and (Abdullah ,2019), major challenges include:

- Funding Shortages: Impairing service quality and requiring partnerships for financial support.
- Technological Advancements**:** Needing ongoing digital updates and staff training.
- Public Awareness: Lack of societal engagement requires outreach initiatives.
- Human Resource Management: Necessitating staff development programs and recruitment of IT specialists.
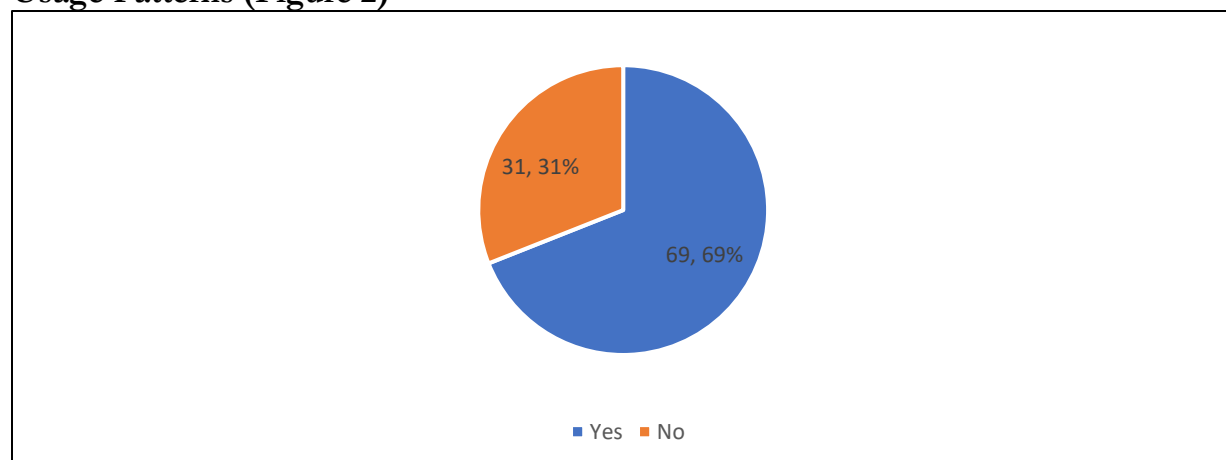
STUDY RESULTS AND ANALYSIS
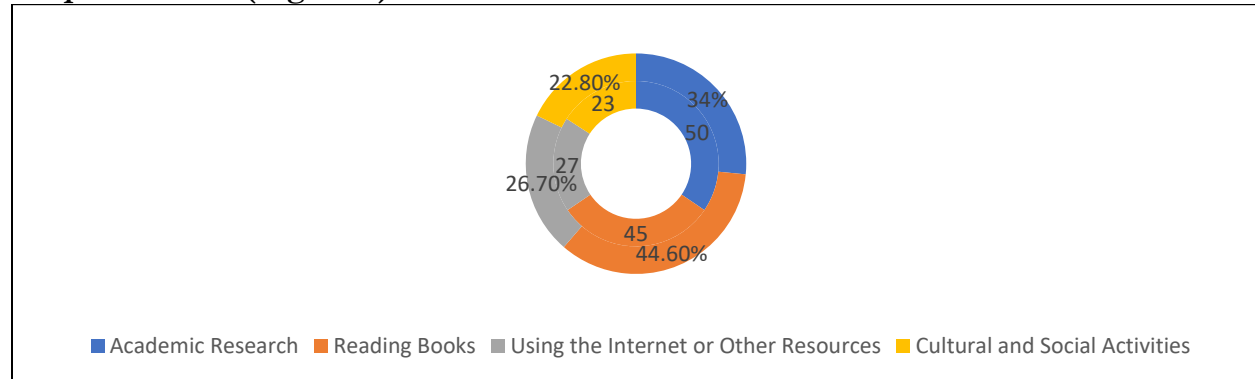
Demographics (Figure 1)

Data showed the highest participation rate from eighth-level students (38.2%), followed by sixth-level (20.9%), and others. This reflects a good representation across academic levels.
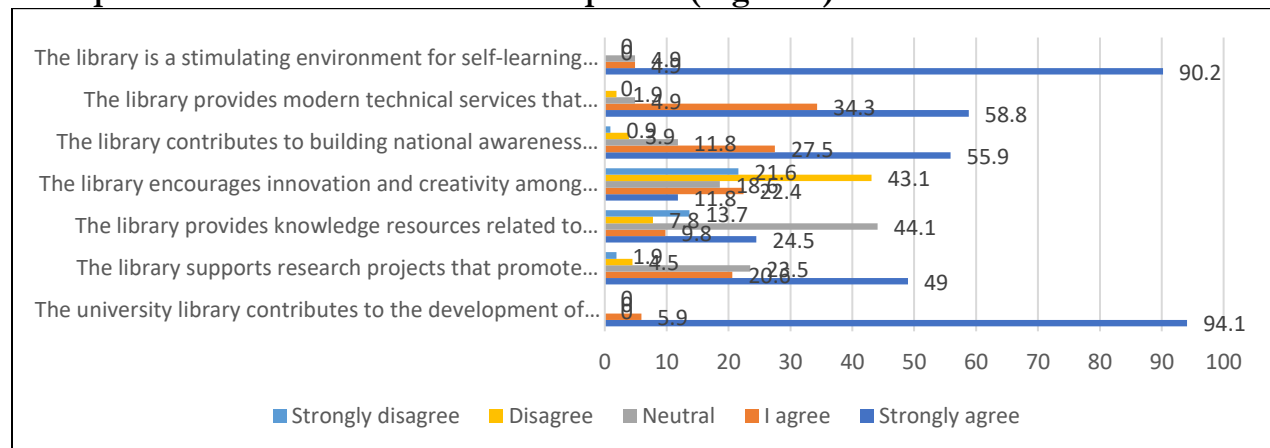
Usage Patterns (Figure 2)

49% of participants regularly used information institutions, while 51% did not—indicating moderate engagement and the need for increased awareness campaigns.

Purpose of Use (Figure 3)

Academic research (34%) was the primary reason for using information institutions, followed by book reading (31%), internet use (19%), and cultural/social events (16%).
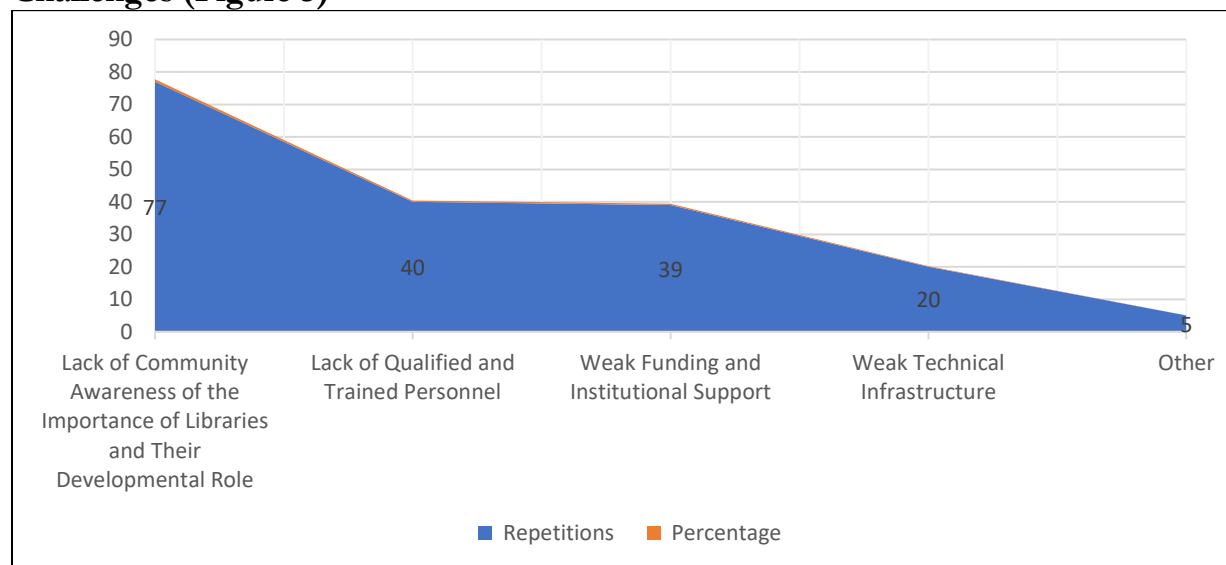
Perceptions of Role in National Development (Figure 4)

Participants highly valued the traditional academic and technical functions of libraries:

- Intellectual and scientific skill development – 94.1% strongly agree.

- Self-learning and community service – 90.2% strongly agree.

- Provision of modern technologies – 58.8% strongly agree.

- Building national awareness – 55.9% strongly agree.

- Support for research projects – 49% strongly agree.

- Availability of sustainable development resources – 24.5% strongly agree.

- Encouragement of innovation – only 11.8% strongly agree.

This reflects a gap between actual offerings and user perceptions regarding non-academic contributions such as innovation and sustainability.

Challenges (Figure 5)

The most significant challenge identified was lack of public awareness (75.5%), followed by shortage of qualified staff (39.2%), insufficient funding (38.2%), and weak digital infrastructure (19.6%). Additional concerns included limited collaboration and poor alignment with societal needs.

CONCLUSIONS

− Regular library use was reported by 51% of participants.

− Academic motives dominated library use (research: 49.5%, reading: 31%).

− Participants recognized libraries' role in developing intellectual skills (94.1%) and promoting self-learning (90.2%), but less so in innovation and sustainable development.

− Key challenges were low societal awareness, staff shortages, underfunding, and technological gaps.

Recommendations

− Launch awareness campaigns targeting students and the broader community.

− Enhance digital infrastructure and expand online services.

− Organize cultural and social programs to increase engagement.

− Foster collaboration with government and academic institutions.

− Provide ongoing staff training in modern technologies.

− Align content and services with national and sustainable development goals.

− Encourage and support student-led research initiatives aligned with Vision 2030.

− Ensure sustainable government funding for public and academic libraries.

− Develop integrated digital platforms for universal access.

− Embed libraries into national development strategies as key knowledge agents.

Disclosure Statement
In keeping with our ethical commitment as researchers, we have no financial or commercial interests that may be affected by the research described in the attached paper.

The research does not require approval from the Ethics Committee, as the data was collected from female students in the Department of Information Science at the university, within a framework of transparency and clarity.

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