

**OPINIONS OF ACADEMICIANS ON DIGITAL LITERACY:
A PHENOMENOLOGY STUDY****DR. ANJU TRIPATHI***HOD (EDUCATION),
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The rapid advancement of digital technologies has significantly transformed the educational landscape. Digital literacy, once seen as an optional skill, has become a critical competency for both students and educators. Defined as the ability to use information and communication technologies (ICT) to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, digital literacy now plays a central role in academia. However, despite its growing importance, there remains a gap in understanding how academicians, the individuals tasked with teaching and fostering digital skills in students, perceive their own digital literacy and how they integrate it into their professional lives.

This study aims to explore the opinions of academicians on digital literacy through a phenomenological lens, seeking to understand the lived experiences and attitudes of educators towards digital tools, technologies, and platforms. By employing a qualitative methodology, the research delves into how academicians experience digital literacy, the challenges they face, and the opportunities they perceive in a rapidly digitalizing academic world.

Literature Review

Megha Sharma (2020) conducted a study titled "An Analysis of Digital Transformation and Its Effect on the Education Sector." The research aimed to explore the influence of digital transformation on education and to shed light on the emerging shifts within the sector. The study concluded that digital transformation fosters an adaptable learning environment that encourages innovation, shifting the traditional teacher-centered classroom model toward a more collaborative learning atmosphere.

The digital revolution has profoundly impacted nearly every aspect of modern life. A study by Zafari et al. (2018) highlighted statistics suggesting that more than 3.5 billion people now have internet access. This widespread connectivity has transformed how individuals interact with one another and perceive the world. The education sector, in particular, has embraced digital transformation to remain competitive and assume a position of innovative leadership. Naimi-Sadigh et al. (2022) described digital transformation as the process of leveraging digital

technologies to reshape business cultures, operations, and customer experiences—or create entirely new ones to meet evolving market and business demands.

Purpose of the Research

The aim of this study is to get the opinions of academicians about the concept of digital literacy, which is frequently encountered today, and to raise awareness on the subject in this context.

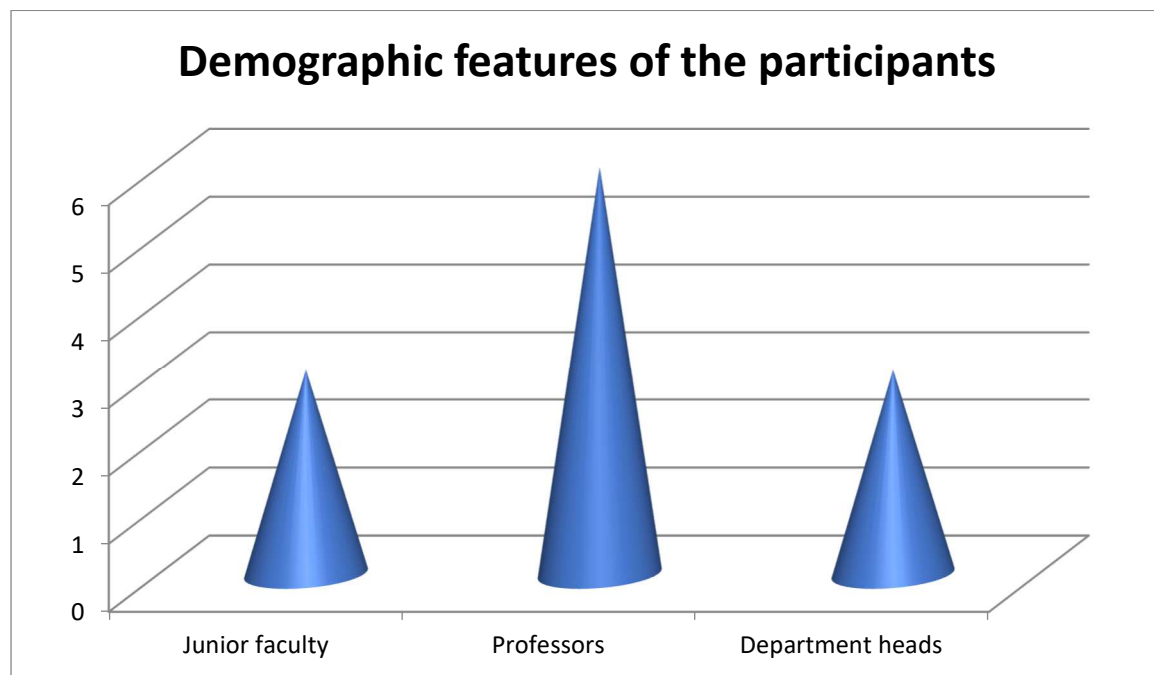
Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a phenomenological approach, focusing on the lived experiences of academicians with digital literacy. Phenomenology is chosen because it allows for an exploration of the essence of participants' experiences without imposing preconceived notions or theoretical frameworks (Van Manen, 1990). Through semi-structured interviews, the research seeks to uncover common themes and insights into how academicians perceive digital literacy in their professional and personal lives.

Sampling and Data Collection

Participants were purposively sampled to represent a diverse group of academicians from various disciplines and levels of experience. A total of 12 academicians, including junior faculty, tenured professors, and department heads, participated in the study. Their experience with digital tools ranged from novice to expert, allowing for a broad spectrum of opinions and perspectives to be captured.



Data were collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The interviews, lasting between 45 to 90 minutes, were conducted face-to-face and via video conferencing. Participants were asked open-ended questions about their understanding of digital literacy, the role of digital tools in their teaching and research, challenges they face in integrating digital tools, and their perceptions of the future of digital literacy in higher education.

Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed verbatim, and the transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis. Following the guidelines of phenomenological research, the data were coded and categorized into themes that reflected the essence of the participants' experiences. The process involved multiple readings of the transcripts to ensure an in-depth understanding of the participants' views and the identification of recurring patterns.

Findings

The analysis of the interview data revealed several key themes related to the opinions of academicians on digital literacy:

1. Digital Literacy as an Evolving Competency

Many participants viewed digital literacy as a constantly evolving skill set. They acknowledged that the rapid pace of technological change necessitates continuous learning and adaptation. While some expressed excitement about the opportunities this offers, others felt overwhelmed by the need to keep up with new tools and platforms.

2. Unequal Access to Digital Resources

Several academicians noted the issue of unequal access to digital tools and resources, both for themselves and their students. This digital divide was seen as a significant barrier to fully integrating digital literacy into higher education. Participants expressed concern that some students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, may struggle to develop digital literacy due to lack of access to technology.

3. Digital Tools and Pedagogy

The role of digital tools in pedagogy emerged as a central theme. While most participants recognized the potential for digital tools to enhance teaching, opinions were divided on how best to integrate them into traditional pedagogical practices. Some expressed a preference for blended learning approaches, while others saw the potential for fully online education.

4. Resistance to Digital Literacy

A recurring theme was resistance to digital literacy, particularly among older academicians who had spent much of their careers without the use of digital tools. Some participants

expressed skepticism about the value of digital literacy, suggesting that it may detract from more traditional forms of academic rigor. Others reported feelings of frustration or inadequacy when faced with the need to use unfamiliar digital tools.

Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the diverse perspectives of academicians on digital literacy. While many recognize its importance in contemporary higher education, there are significant variations in how digital literacy is understood and practiced. The resistance expressed by some participants suggests that more support is needed to help academicians integrate digital literacy into their teaching and research.

Moreover, the issue of unequal access to digital resources raises important questions about the inclusivity of digital literacy initiatives. To ensure that all students and educators can benefit from digital tools, institutions must address the digital divide and provide adequate training and support for faculty members.

Conclusion

This phenomenological study provides valuable insights into the opinions of academicians on digital literacy. As higher education continues to evolve in response to technological advancements, understanding the experiences and challenges of educators is crucial. The study underscores the need for ongoing professional development, institutional support, and efforts to bridge the digital divide. Future research should explore how these findings can inform the development of digital literacy programs that are responsive to the needs of both academicians and students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Higher education institutions should offer regular digital literacy training for academicians.
- Institutional policies should encourage the integration of digital literacy into all academic programs.
- Collaborative initiatives between faculty and students should be promoted to enhance digital literacy across the academic community.

Future Research Directions

Future research should explore the impact of digital literacy on teaching effectiveness and student outcomes, as well as the role of digital literacy in academic leadership and administration. Additionally, longitudinal studies could provide insights into the long-term effects of digital literacy initiatives in higher education.

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