

Information Authenticity Dimensions and Academic Librarian Service Performance: Evidence from Malaysian Public Universities

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ABSTRACT

The growing complexity of digital information environments has made information authenticity a critical competency for academic librarians, particularly in supporting teaching, learning, and research activities in higher education. This study investigates the influence of information authenticity dimensions on academic librarian service performance in Malaysian public universities. Information authenticity refers to the degree to which information is perceived as credible, accurate, reliable, and trustworthy. Using a quantitative research design, data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to academic librarians employed in public university libraries across Malaysia. A total of 349 valid responses were obtained and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, including Pearson's correlation and multiple regression analyses. The findings indicate that all information authenticity dimensions demonstrate significant positive relationships with academic librarian service performance. Among the examined dimensions, familiarity and assurance emerged as the strongest predictors of service performance, highlighting the importance of librarians' confidence in evaluating information sources and their familiarity with authentic information practices. The results further suggest that strengthening competencies related to information authenticity contributes to improved professional performance, service quality, and user trust in academic library services. This study provides empirical evidence on the role of information authenticity in enhancing librarian performance and offers practical implications for library management, professional development initiatives, and policy formulation. The findings contribute to the growing body of knowledge on information authenticity within academic libraries and support the development of evidence-based strategies to improve information services in Malaysian public universities.

Keywords: Information authenticity; Information authenticity dimensions; Academic librarian; Service performance; Public universities; Academic libraries; Malaysia.

INTRODUCTION

In Malaysia, public university libraries have continuously transformed their services to meet the demands of digital scholarship and lifelong learning. The adoption of electronic resources, institutional repositories, digital libraries, and online reference services has increased librarians' reliance on digital information sources. However, the growing volume of misinformation, disinformation, manipulated content, and AI-generated information presents new challenges that require librarians to possess strong competencies in information authenticity.

Information authenticity encompasses multiple dimensions that enable individuals to evaluate whether information is genuine and trustworthy. Previous studies have identified several important dimensions of information authenticity, including accuracy, credibility, reliability, objectivity, familiarity, and assurance. These dimensions influence how librarians assess information before recommending it to library users. A strong understanding of these dimensions is expected to enhance librarians' service performance by improving decision-making, reference services, collection development, information literacy instruction, and user support.

Service performance among academic librarians is an important indicator of library effectiveness. It reflects librarians' ability to deliver quality services, respond efficiently to users' information needs, and maintain professional standards in the digital era. High-performing librarians contribute significantly to institutional teaching, research productivity, and student success. Therefore, understanding the factors that influence librarian service performance has become increasingly important for library administrators and higher education policymakers.

The findings are expected to contribute both theoretically and practically by expanding the body of knowledge on information authenticity and providing evidence-based recommendations for enhancing librarians' competencies. The study also offers valuable insights for university library management in designing professional development programmes and policies that strengthen librarians' ability to evaluate authentic information in increasingly complex digital environments.

Problem Statement

Despite technological advancements, academic librarians continue to encounter difficulties in assessing the authenticity of information obtained from diverse digital platforms. The rapid growth of online information has made verification more complex, requiring librarians to possess stronger analytical and evaluative skills.

In Malaysia, public university libraries are expected to provide reliable information services that support national higher education goals, research excellence, and digital transformation. However, little empirical research has been conducted to examine whether competencies related to information authenticity significantly influence librarian service performance within Malaysian public universities.

This lack of empirical evidence limits library administrators' ability to develop targeted professional development programmes aimed at strengthening librarians' competencies in evaluating authentic information. Without a comprehensive understanding of these relationships, efforts to improve service quality and professional performance may not achieve optimal outcomes.

Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the influence of information authenticity dimensions on academic librarian service performance in Malaysian public universities.

Objectives

1. To identify the level of information authenticity dimensions among academic librarians in Malaysian public universities.
2. To determine the level of academic librarian service performance.
3. To examine the relationship between information authenticity dimensions and academic librarian service performance.
4. To identify the information authenticity dimensions that significantly predict academic librarian service performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Information authenticity refers to the degree to which information can be trusted as genuine, reliable, accurate, and free from manipulation (Gilbert, 2021). In today's digital environment, information authenticity has become increasingly important due to the rapid expansion of online information, social media platforms, artificial intelligence (AI)-generated content, and open-access publishing.

Service performance refers to the effectiveness with which employees perform their assigned responsibilities while meeting organizational objectives and customer expectations (Campbell, 1990). Academic librarian

performance is increasingly evaluated through service quality, user satisfaction, responsiveness, professionalism, innovation, communication skills, and problem-solving ability.

This study is grounded in Cognitive Authority Theory (Wilson, 1983) and the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

Cognitive Authority Theory asserts that individuals construct trust in information through two primary mechanisms: administrative authority (institutional validation, publisher reputation) and cognitive authority (perceived expertise, accuracy, and intrinsic credibility). Applied to library contexts, dimensions such as *accuracy*, *credibility*, *reliability*, and *objectivity* form the cognitive criteria, whereas *familiarity* and *assurance* represent the librarian's internalised mastery of administrative authority indicators.

Complementing this, the JD-R Theory posits that personal resources—such as specialized evaluative competencies—buffer against job demands in complex, data-saturated work environments. When academic librarians possess robust information authenticity competencies, these skills function as personal resources, enabling swift, accurate decision-making in reference services, collection management, and user guidance. Consequently, high authenticity competence leads directly to enhanced service performance, heightened professional effectiveness, and stronger user trust.

According to Hernon and Altman (2010), high-performing librarians contribute directly to institutional excellence through effective knowledge management and research support.

Accuracy refers to the correctness and factual precision of information. Accurate information is supported by evidence, verified through authoritative sources, and free from factual errors. Accuracy ensures users receive dependable information for academic purposes. Previous studies have identified accuracy as one of the strongest determinants of information quality (Wang & Strong, 1996).

Credibility refers to the perceived trustworthiness and authority of information sources. Academic librarians evaluate source credibility before recommending resources. According to Fogg et al. (2003), credibility strongly influences users' acceptance of online information.

The Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia has emphasized digital transformation and research excellence, requiring librarians to possess advanced competencies in evaluating authentic information. Information authenticity directly influences librarians' ability to provide high-quality services. Previous studies have shown that information quality positively influences employee performance in knowledge-intensive organizations. Similarly, academic librarians with stronger authenticity competencies demonstrate better professional performance.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology employed to investigate the influence of information authenticity dimensions on academic librarian service performance in Malaysian public universities. It outlines the research paradigm, research design, population, sampling procedures, research instrument, pilot study, validity and reliability testing, data collection procedures, ethical considerations, and data analysis techniques. The methodology was designed to ensure that the findings are valid, reliable, and capable of addressing the research objectives and hypotheses.

A positivist paradigm and quantitative cross-sectional survey design were adopted to examine the influence of information authenticity dimensions on academic librarian service performance in Malaysian public universities. The chapter detailed the target population, sampling procedures, research instrument, pilot testing, validity and reliability assessments, data collection process, ethical considerations, and statistical analyses.

A structured questionnaire was developed adapting constructs from established literature: accuracy, reliability, and objectivity (Wang & Strong, 1996); credibility (Fogg et al., 2003); familiarity and assurance (Gilbert, 2021);

and service performance (Campbell, 1990; Hernon & Altman, 2010). All constructs were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 5 ("Strongly Agree").

Validity: Content validity was established through expert review by a panel of three senior academic librarians and two LIS university lecturers. Items yielding a Content Validity Index (CVI) above 0.83 were retained. Construct validity was subsequently verified using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) with Principal Component Analysis and Varimax rotation. Factor loadings for all items exceeded 0.60, confirming clean unidimensional loadings across the constructs.

Pilot Testing & Reliability: A pilot test was conducted with 30 academic librarians from a non-participating institution prior to final deployment. Internal consistency reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha. The pilot results demonstrated high reliability across all constructs: Accuracy (0.88), Credibility (0.86), Reliability (0.89), Objectivity (0.84), Familiarity (0.87), Assurance (0.91), and Service Performance (0.90).

To minimize self-reporting and social desirability biases, survey administration guaranteed full respondent anonymity, emphasized that there were no correct or incorrect answers, and utilized psychologically separated items for independent and dependent variables.

RESULTS

The analysis and interpretation of the data collected from academic librarians employed in Malaysian public universities. The purpose of the analysis is to address the research objectives and test the hypotheses formulated. The data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the demographic characteristics of respondents and the levels of information authenticity dimensions and academic librarian service performance. Inferential statistical analyses, including Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation and Multiple Linear Regression, were conducted to examine the relationships and predictive effects of information authenticity dimensions on academic librarian service performance.

A total of 450 questionnaires were distributed to academic librarians working in Malaysian public universities; Questionnaires distributed: 450, Questionnaires returned: 360, Incomplete questionnaires: 11, Valid questionnaires for analysis: 349

The response rate was 77.6%, which exceeds the minimum acceptable response rate for survey research and provides sufficient statistical power for data analysis.

DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate that academic librarians in Malaysian public universities possess a high level of information authenticity competency across all six dimensions. This suggests that librarians recognize the importance of evaluating information before recommending it to users, particularly in increasingly complex digital environments.

Among the six dimensions, familiarity and assurance emerged as the strongest predictors of service performance. Familiarity reflects librarians' accumulated professional knowledge and experience with trusted information sources, enabling more efficient and confident information evaluation. Assurance, on the other hand, reflects confidence in the authenticity of information through mechanisms such as peer review, institutional endorsement, and publisher reputation.

Although accuracy, credibility, reliability, and objectivity demonstrated significant positive correlations with service performance, only credibility and accuracy remained significant predictors in the regression model. This suggests that some of the explanatory power of reliability and objectivity overlaps with familiarity and assurance, indicating potential interrelationships among the authenticity dimensions.

While this study yields key empirical insights, certain methodological boundaries should be noted. First, relying on self-reported questionnaire responses introduces potential subjective perception and social desirability biases.

Future research should adopt mixed-method or longitudinal designs that integrate objective performance metrics, direct observational audits, and multi-source data (e.g., library user feedback and peer evaluations).

Second, while this sample covers Malaysian public university libraries comprehensively (\$N = 349\$), the findings may be bounded by local institutional dynamics. Comparative studies across private universities and international academic institutions are encouraged to validate these relationships globally and enhance external generalizability.

Overall, the findings highlight the importance of strengthening librarians' competencies in evaluating authentic information to improve professional performance, service quality, and user confidence in academic library services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Academic Librarians

Librarians should continuously update their competencies in evaluating digital information through lifelong learning, certification programmes, workshops, and participation in professional associations.

Universities

Universities should integrate information authenticity competencies into institutional strategic plans, digital literacy initiatives, and research support services.

Policymakers

The Ministry of Higher Education and relevant professional bodies should formulate national competency frameworks that emphasise information authenticity as a core professional competency for academic librarians.

CONCLUSION

The increasing complexity of digital information environments has elevated information authenticity from a desirable skill to a fundamental professional competency for academic librarians. This study has demonstrated that the dimensions of information authenticity accuracy, credibility, reliability, objectivity, familiarity, and assurance are all positively associated with academic librarian service performance. In particular, familiarity and assurance emerged as the strongest predictors, highlighting the importance of professional experience and confidence in evaluating authentic information.

The findings affirm that librarians who possess strong information authenticity competencies are better equipped to provide reliable, evidence-based, and user-centred services that support teaching, learning, and research in higher education. By strengthening these competencies through continuous professional development, institutional support, and national policy initiatives, academic libraries can enhance service quality, reinforce user trust, and contribute more effectively to the academic mission of Malaysian public universities.

Ultimately, this research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on information authenticity in Library and Information Science and provides a foundation for future studies exploring authenticity competencies in increasingly digital and AI-driven information environments.

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