

DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS OF DIGITAL WELL-BEING AMONG NIGERIAN STUDENTS OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE

Luqman Ayanlola Atanda^{1*}, Ajibola Sunmade Gbotosho², Opeyemi Funmilayo Balogun²

¹College Library, Federal College of Education, Iwo, Osun State, Nigeria

²Department of Library and Information Science, Faculty of Communication and Information Technology, Osun State University, Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria

*Corresponding author: atandala@fceiwo.edu.ng

ORCID: Atanda 0009-0008-2883-9234 · Gbotosho 0009-0004-4264-7299

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Abstract

Digital technologies now mediate most of what students in higher education do, from locating sources to submitting assessed work, and the consequences of that mediation for student well-being have become a legitimate object of study in their own right. This review examines the demographic factors associated with digital well-being among Library and Information Science students in Nigeria, a population for whom digital information competence is not incidental but constitutive of professional preparation. A structured narrative literature review was conducted. Peer reviewed journal articles, scholarly publisher platforms, indexed research records and Nigerian Library and Information Science journals published between 2020 and 2026 were identified through PubMed, SpringerLink, Wiley Online Library, Oxford Academic and African Journals Online, screened against stated inclusion and exclusion criteria, and synthesised thematically rather than statistically because the retained sources varied too widely in population, design and measurement to support pooling. Evidence was organised across five demographic dimensions: age, gender, socioeconomic position, level of study and geographical location. The synthesis found that the Nigerian evidence base speaks to these dimensions unevenly. Socioeconomic position and geographical location are supported most directly, principally through documented differences in device ownership, connectivity cost, electricity reliability and institutional infrastructure. Level of study is supported indirectly through differences in the intensity and purpose of digital engagement. Age and gender remain the least substantiated: the available Nigerian studies rarely disaggregate digital well-being outcomes by either, so claims about them rest largely on wider higher education evidence of uncertain transferability. Three challenges recurred across the literature: a persistent gap between technical access and the competencies required to use technology well, the cost and unreliability of connectivity and power, and limited institutional provision for mental health alongside continuing stigma. The review concludes that digital well-being in this setting is produced by the interaction between demographic position and institutional conditions rather than by demographic attributes alone, and that the principal need is for Nigerian studies that measure digital well-being directly and report it disaggregated by demographic group.

Keywords: digital well-being; LIS students; Nigeria; demographic factors; digital literacy; digital equity; ICT access; higher education

1. Introduction

Digital technologies have become integral to higher education, changing how students locate information, communicate with lecturers and peers, collaborate on academic tasks and participate in assessment. The change is not merely one of convenience. Where coursework, library access and administrative processes all run through digital channels, the quality of a student's digital experience becomes a condition of academic participation rather than an adjunct to it.

Digital well-being is the construct through which that experience is examined. Vanden Abeele (2021) conceptualises it as a dynamic state rather than a fixed attribute, arising from the ongoing interaction between a person and their digital environment, and Al-Mansoori et al. (2023) trace in their scoping review how the construct has moved from theory towards design practice. A recent scoping review of higher education learners identified digital self-regulation, digital self-efficacy and digital literacy among the factors most consistently associated with well-being outcomes in student populations (Bahar et al., 2026).

The question has particular force for Library and Information Science students. Digital information competencies are central both to their education and to the profession they are preparing to enter, which means that any deficit in digital capability is at once a well-being issue and a professional one. Alex-Nmecha and Ejitagh (2023) evaluated digital information literacy among undergraduate Library and Information Science students in Nigerian universities and identified a continuing need for stronger provision, while Agina-Obu and Okwu (2023) found digital literacy closely connected to students' use of digital resources.

Access and effective use are not, however, distributed evenly. Nigerian studies have documented poor internet connectivity, erratic electricity supply, the cost of data and limited device ownership as recurring constraints on student digital participation (Ajala et al., 2023; Toyo, 2023). These are material conditions, and they fall differently on different students. A student who must purchase data in small increments and charge a shared device during intermittent power supply is not having the same digital experience as one with a personal laptop and campus broadband, even where both are formally enrolled in the same programme.

This is where the demographic question enters. If digital experience varies systematically with the material and social position of the student, then institutional responses designed for an undifferentiated student body will reach some groups and not others. Yet the available Nigerian evidence is dispersed across studies that examine adjacent constructs, use different measures and rarely report outcomes disaggregated by demographic group. The result is a literature from which it is difficult to determine which demographic contexts actually require differentiated institutional response.

Against this background, the present review synthesises recent literature on the demographic determinants of digital well-being among Library and Information Science students in Nigeria. It addresses two questions. Which demographic factors are discussed in the literature as relevant to digital well-being in this population? And what is the strength and direction of the available evidence for each?

1.1 Contribution of the Review

The review makes three contributions. First, it organises a dispersed evidence base around five demographic dimensions, so that what is known and what is assumed can be distinguished. Second, it appraises the strength of evidence for each dimension separately rather than treating demographic variation as a single undifferentiated claim, which matters because the dimensions are not equally supported. Third, it translates the synthesis into implications for Library and Information Science curricula, academic library provision and institutional support, with attention to which responses the evidence actually warrants.

A caution is warranted at the outset and is returned to throughout. Several of the demographic claims commonly made about student digital experience are intuitively plausible but thinly evidenced in the Nigerian Library and Information Science context specifically. Distinguishing the plausible from the demonstrated is one of the functions this review is intended to serve, and in places the honest conclusion is that the evidence does not yet support a determinate statement.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Approach

A structured narrative literature review methodology was adopted. Rather than estimating a population parameter from newly collected participant data, the design was chosen to assemble and interpret existing published evidence across studies that differ in population, design and measurement. The review was structured so that source identification, eligibility decisions, data extraction and thematic synthesis are explicit and auditable, and its reporting was informed by the transparency principles articulated in the PRISMA statement (Page et al., 2021), without claiming the status of a systematic review with meta-analysis.

2.2 Source Identification

Peer reviewed journal articles, scholarly publisher platforms, indexed research records, Nigerian Library and Information Science journals and relevant methodological or institutional sources were consulted. The principal databases and platforms examined were PubMed, SpringerLink, Wiley Online Library, Oxford Academic and African Journals Online. The inclusion of African Journals Online was deliberate, since a substantial portion of Nigerian Library and Information Science scholarship

appears in journals that the large international indexes do not cover, and a search confined to those indexes would systematically underrepresent the national evidence base this review is concerned with.

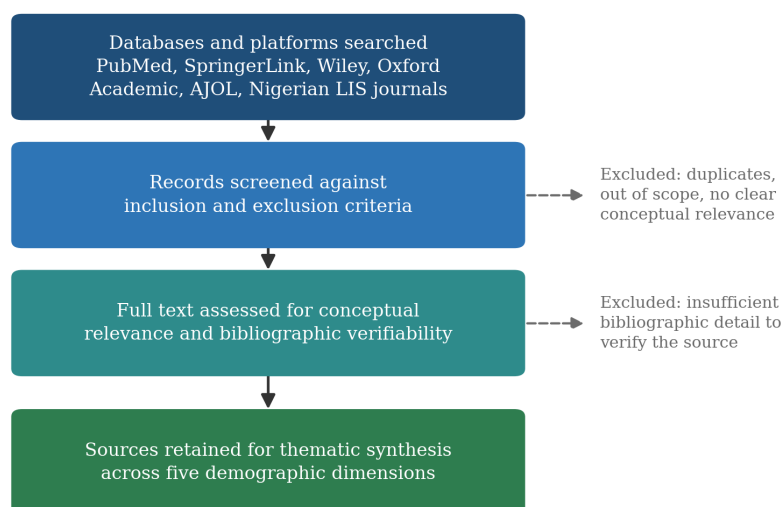


Figure 1: Source identification, screening and selection. Records were screened against the stated criteria, assessed in full text for conceptual relevance and bibliographic verifiability, and retained for thematic synthesis across the five demographic dimensions.

2.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Sources were eligible when they met all or most of the following criteria.

- Published between 2020 and 2026.
- Available in English.
- Addressed higher education students, Library and Information Science students, or evidence of direct conceptual relevance to these populations.
- Examined digital well-being directly, or a closely related dimension including digital self-regulation, digital literacy, ICT utilisation, digital access, internet use or digital equity.
- Provided sufficient bibliographic information to permit identification and verification.
- Contributed evidence relevant to at least one demographic dimension or to the contextual conditions through which demographic differences may operate.

Sources were excluded where they were unconnected to higher education or to the conceptual focus of the review, addressed populations outside the research setting without evident conceptual significance, or lacked the bibliographic detail required for verification.

2.4 Data Extraction and Synthesis

For each retained source the following were extracted: authors, study context, population or unit of analysis, research design where reported, the dimension of digital well-being addressed, the demographic factor considered, and the principal findings. Evidence was then synthesised thematically. The five demographic dimensions were used as the initial organising frame, and contextual conditions were treated as a cross cutting category because they recur across dimensions.

The synthesis is narrative rather than statistical. The retained studies varied substantially in population, research design, measurement instrument and reported outcome, and pooling estimates across them would have produced a figure with no defensible interpretation. This is a limitation of the evidence base rather than a preference of the reviewers, and it is itself a finding: the Nigerian literature on this question is not yet at a stage where quantitative synthesis is possible.

2.5 Trustworthiness and Methodological Limitations

Peer reviewed publications and sources with identifiable authors, publication venues, publication dates and, where available, persistent identifiers were preferred, in order to increase the verifiability of the evidence base. Three limitations should nevertheless be stated. The review is narrative, so it does not produce a pooled effect estimate and cannot quantify the magnitude of demographic differences. The search was confined to sources in English, which may exclude relevant work. And the number of Nigerian studies addressing digital well-being directly in the Library and Information Science population

remains small, so several of the dimensions examined rest substantially on evidence drawn from adjacent constructs or wider higher education populations. Where that is the case it is stated explicitly in Section 4 rather than smoothed over.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

The study relied exclusively on secondary published and publicly accessible documentary sources and did not collect personal data from human participants. Participant consent and ethical clearance were therefore not applicable. All sources are attributed and cited.

3. Digital Well-Being in the Library and Information Science Student Context

Digital well-being is a multidimensional construct concerned with how digital technologies and connectivity interact with physical, psychological, emotional, social and academic functioning. Vanden Abeele (2021) emphasises its dynamic character: well-being is not a property a person possesses but a balance continually negotiated between the demands digital environments make and the resources available to meet them. That framing matters for the present review, because it locates the object of study in the interaction rather than in the individual.

For Library and Information Science students in Nigeria, digital well-being is tied closely to academic participation. Students use online information resources, databases, electronic library services and digital communication platforms as a routine condition of study (Alex-Nmecha and Ejitagha, 2023; Agina-Obu and Okwu, 2023). Where access barriers and unreliable infrastructure intervene, the consequence is not only inconvenience but reduced capacity to complete academic work at the standard expected (Ajala et al., 2023; Toyo, 2023).

The analysis here is guided by a digital well-being perspective rather than a technology adoption model. The distinction is substantive. Adoption models ask whether and why a technology is taken up, treating use as the outcome of interest. A digital well-being perspective asks what the consequences of use are for the person using it, which permits the possibility, documented in this literature, that intensive use coexists with poor outcomes. Fyneman (2023), examining internet addiction among Library and Information Science students in Nigerian universities, provides a case in point: the students concerned are not failing to adopt the technology.

An equity lens is also necessary, because digital opportunity is shaped by material and institutional conditions rather than by individual disposition alone. Digital well-being in this setting is consequently not only an individual matter but an institutional one. Training in digital habits, counselling provision, infrastructure investment and policy on online conduct all operate at the level of the institution, and the demographic variation this review examines is in large part variation in how institutional conditions are experienced by differently positioned students.

Demographic dimensions

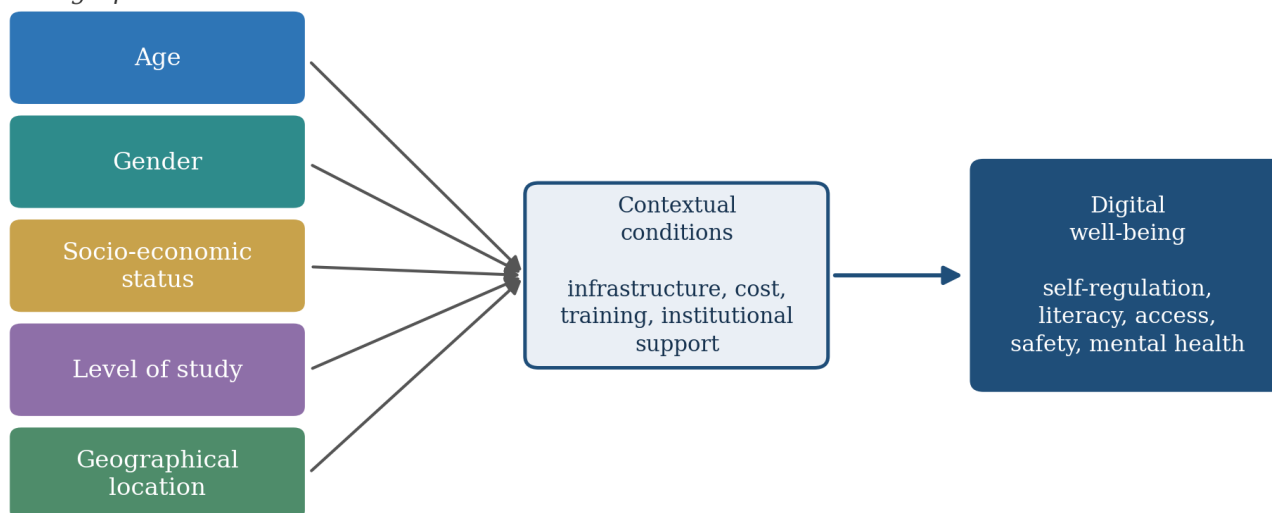


Figure 2: Conceptual framework. Demographic dimensions are understood to shape digital well-being through contextual conditions of infrastructure, cost, training and institutional support, rather than directly. The framing locates the object of analysis in the interaction between student position and institutional provision.

4. Demographic Dimensions of Digital Well-Being

The five dimensions are examined in turn. For each, the review states what the evidence supports, what it does not, and where claims commonly made in the wider literature outrun the Nigerian evidence available. Table 1 and Figure 3 summarise the appraisal.

Table 1: Appraisal of evidence across the five demographic dimensions

Dimension	Nature of available evidence	Appraised strength	Principal gap
Age	Wider higher education evidence; little Nigerian disaggregation	Limited	No Nigerian study reports digital well-being by age band
Gender	Conceptually motivated; few disaggregated Nigerian findings	Limited	Digital safety and conduct remain largely unexamined
Socioeconomic position	Documented differences in device access, data cost and power	Moderate	Access is measured; well-being outcomes rarely linked to it
Level of study	Differences in intensity and purpose of digital engagement	Moderate	Undergraduate and postgraduate comparison is largely absent
Geographical location	Consistent infrastructure differences across regions	Moderate to stronger	Institutional rather than individual data predominate

Note. Appraisal reflects the reviewers' assessment of the directness and consistency of evidence relating each dimension to digital well-being in the Nigerian Library and Information Science population specifically.

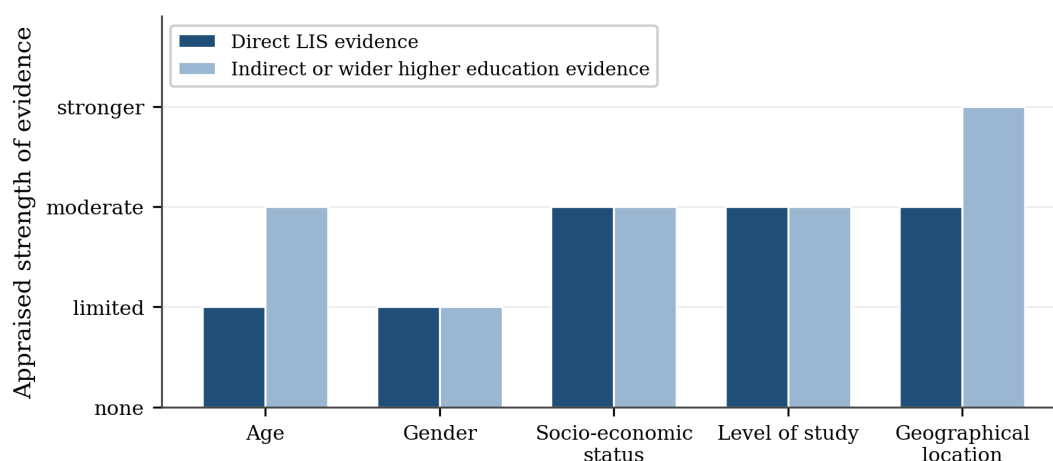


Figure 3: Appraised strength of evidence by demographic dimension, distinguishing evidence drawn directly from Nigerian Library and Information Science populations from evidence drawn from wider higher education research. The contrast between the two bars is the substantive point: the dimensions most often asserted are not those best supported.

4.1 Age

Age appears in the literature as a possible contextual factor in students' digital experiences. The higher education evidence synthesised by Bahar et al. (2026) includes learners across a range of ages and identifies digital self-regulation as a consistent correlate of well-being, which provides indirect grounds for expecting age related variation, since self-regulatory capacity is itself associated with maturity.

The Nigerian evidence does not, however, permit a determinate statement. Older and younger students plausibly encounter different digital demands: mature students may carry employment and family responsibilities that compress study time, while younger students may have longer histories of recreational technology use. Neither pattern has been demonstrated for this population, and the available evidence does not justify a universal assumption that one age group experiences better digital well-being than another. The honest appraisal is that age is frequently invoked and rarely measured.

4.2 Gender

Gender is relevant in principle because students may encounter different patterns of digital participation, safety, social interaction and help seeking. The conceptual case is strong: online harassment, differential comfort in digital public space and differences in willingness to seek support are all documented in wider literatures and all bear directly on well-being.

The Nigerian Library and Information Science evidence addressing these patterns is sparse. Studies in this field more commonly report aggregate levels of literacy, access or utilisation without disaggregation by gender, and where gender appears it is typically as a sample characteristic rather than an analytic variable. Digital safety and online conduct in particular remain comparatively underexplored. This gap is consequential for policy, because the institutional responses most often proposed under this heading, namely gender inclusive digital policy and safe online learning environments, currently rest on conceptual argument rather than on local evidence of the problems they are intended to address.

4.3 Socioeconomic Position

Socioeconomic circumstances influence the material conditions of digital participation. Access to personal devices, dependable connectivity and suitable study space are purchased rather than given, and their absence constrains what a student can do

irrespective of capability or motivation. This is the dimension for which Nigerian evidence is most direct: studies consistently identify cost of data, device availability and electricity supply as constraints on student digital participation (Ajala et al., 2023; Toyo, 2023), and recent evidence from Library and Information Science students indicates that inadequate access and training remain barriers to effective participation (Okpodu-Philip, 2026).

A qualification is nevertheless required. What these studies establish is variation in access, not variation in well-being. The inferential step from one to the other is reasonable but it has not been tested directly in this population, and it is not trivially true: a student with constrained access may compensate through institutional facilities, shared resources or altered study patterns, and the well-being consequence depends on whether such compensation is available. The evidence supports the claim that socioeconomic position shapes digital conditions; it supports less firmly the claim that it determines digital well-being.

4.4 Level of Study

Level of study shapes the intensity, purpose and complexity of digital engagement. Undergraduate students use digital resources principally for coursework, communication and assessment, while postgraduate students additionally require sustained engagement with research literature, data sources and referencing systems. The demands differ in kind as well as degree, and Ajala et al. (2023) report that computer self-efficacy is associated with students' utilisation of electronic information resources, which suggests that the capability required rises with the complexity of the task.

Direct comparison between levels is largely absent from the Nigerian Library and Information Science literature. The dimension is therefore treated here as moderately supported on conceptual and indirect grounds rather than demonstrated.

4.5 Geographical Location

Geographical location matters because the quality of digital participation depends partly on infrastructure available to students and their institutions, and infrastructure is unevenly distributed. Toyo (2023), examining Library and Information Science students across universities in Southern Nigeria, reports that accessibility and user friendliness of ICT facilities are associated with utilisation, and studies of Nigerian universities more broadly document regional differences in connectivity and power supply (Ajala et al., 2023).

This dimension carries the most consistent evidence of the five, though with an important caveat about its unit of analysis. What is documented is variation between institutions and regions rather than between individually situated students. Institutional location is a reasonable proxy for a student's infrastructural environment, but it conceals variation within institutions, particularly between students living on campus and those commuting from areas with poorer supply.

5. Challenges to Digital Well-Being

Three challenges recur across the reviewed literature. They cut across the demographic dimensions rather than belonging to any one of them, and they interact.

5.1 The Gap Between Access and Competence

A persistent theme is the distance between technical access to digital technologies and the competencies required to use them effectively and responsibly. Alex-Nmecha and Ejitagh (2023) found continuing deficits in digital information literacy among Library and Information Science undergraduates in Nigerian universities, and Agina-Obu and Okwu (2023) report that digital literacy is closely connected to the use students make of digital resources.

The finding carries a particular irony in this population. These are students preparing for a profession organised around information access and retrieval, and the deficit documented is in precisely the competence their discipline exists to cultivate. The implication is not that students are unusually deficient but that possession of access does not confer capability, and curricula that assume otherwise will leave the gap unaddressed.

5.2 Connectivity Cost and Infrastructure Deficits

The cost and reliability of connectivity remain substantial constraints. Nigerian university research identifies poor internet connectivity, erratic power supply and the recurrent expense of data as limits on digital participation (Ajala et al., 2023; Toyo, 2023). These constraints interact with the first: a student who cannot sustain a connection long enough to complete a database search cannot develop search proficiency through practice, so infrastructural limitation becomes a brake on skill acquisition rather than merely on task completion.

5.3 Mental Health Stigma and Limited Support

Digital engagement carries consequences for psychological well-being in both directions. Bahar et al. (2026) identify poor digital self-regulation among the factors associated with adverse well-being outcomes in higher education learners, and Fyneman (2023) documents internet addiction among Library and Information Science students in Nigerian universities. Institutional provision for the resulting needs is limited, and stigma attaching to mental health concerns reduces the likelihood that available provision is used.

This challenge is the least well evidenced of the three in the Nigerian context and the most consequential if left unaddressed, since its effects are cumulative and largely invisible to institutions that do not measure them.

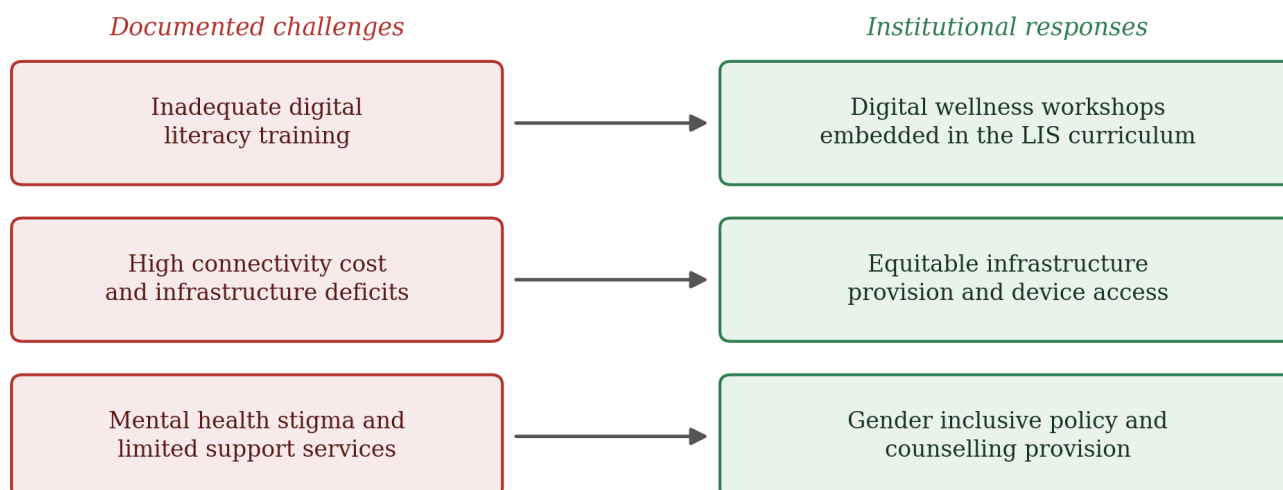


Figure 4: Documented challenges and the institutional responses they imply. The mapping is one to one for presentational clarity, though in practice the challenges interact: infrastructural limitation constrains skill acquisition, and both bear on psychological outcomes.

6. Implications for Library and Information Science Education

6.1 Digital Wellness Provision in the Curriculum

Digital wellness education can be incorporated into Library and Information Science curricula through sessions on digital self-regulation, information evaluation, online safety, privacy and sustainable technology habits. The case for locating this within the curriculum rather than in optional provision is that the competencies concerned are professional as well as personal: a graduate who will advise library users on digital practice requires the capability first.

Such provision should be evaluated rather than assumed effective. Pre and post training assessment, student feedback and periodic digital well-being surveys would permit institutions to establish whether the intervention changes anything, and would simultaneously generate the disaggregated local data whose absence this review has repeatedly noted. The evaluation requirement and the evidence gap are, usefully, addressed by the same instrument.

6.2 Equitable Infrastructure Provision

Equitable provision requires reliable connectivity, access to appropriate devices, functional electronic library resources and dependable power. The evidence reviewed in Section 4.3 and Section 4.5 supports this as the intervention with the clearest empirical warrant, since infrastructural constraint is the most consistently documented of the conditions examined. Provision should be designed with attention to students whose access is intermittent rather than absent, since that is the modal case.

6.3 Gender Inclusive Digital Policy

Policy should provide safe, inclusive and accessible online learning environments. Because digital conduct and safety remain comparatively underexplored in this population, the recommendation here is necessarily twofold: institutions should establish conduct and safety policy on precautionary grounds, and should simultaneously collect the evidence that would allow such policy to be calibrated to the problems that actually arise locally.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

As digital transformation in higher education continues, the digital well-being of Library and Information Science students in Nigeria has become a matter of direct professional as well as personal consequence. This review synthesised recent literature across five demographic dimensions and found the evidence base uneven. Socioeconomic position and geographical location are supported most directly, through documented differences in device access, connectivity cost and institutional infrastructure. Level of study is supported indirectly. Age and gender, though frequently invoked, remain the least substantiated in this population.

The principal conclusion is conceptual as much as empirical. Digital well-being in this setting is produced by the interaction between demographic position and institutional conditions, not by demographic attributes operating alone. A student's socioeconomic position matters because it determines what infrastructure they can purchase privately, which matters in turn only because institutional provision does not meet the need. The implication is that institutional provision is the variable through which demographic disadvantage is either transmitted or interrupted, and it is also the variable institutions control.

The future of the profession depends on graduates who are not only digitally skilled but also able to sustain that skill without cost to their health and academic progress. The following recommendations follow from the synthesis.

1. **Generate disaggregated local evidence.** Nigerian studies should measure digital well-being directly and report it disaggregated by age, gender, level of study and socioeconomic position. The absence of such reporting is the single clearest finding of this review, and it constrains every recommendation that follows.
2. **Embed digital wellness in the curriculum.** Library and Information Science departments should treat digital self-regulation, online safety and sustainable technology habits as professional competencies rather than optional guidance, and should evaluate provision rather than assume its effect.
3. **Prioritise infrastructure where evidence is strongest.** Institutional investment should address connectivity, device access and power supply, since these are the conditions for which the documented constraint is most consistent across studies.
4. **Provide institutional support systems.** University libraries and departments should offer structured digital wellness support through orientation, referral to counselling and visible provision that reduces the effect of stigma on help seeking.
5. **Institutionalise periodic assessment.** Departments should conduct regular digital well-being assessment, which would both monitor the effect of intervention and supply the evidence base the field currently lacks.
6. **Develop professional guidance.** There is a need for institutional and professional guidance on digital well-being within Library and Information Science education, developed with the involvement of the professional associations.

Conflict of Interest

The authors state that they have no known competing financial or non-financial interests that could have influenced the review, the interpretation of the evidence, or the conclusions reported in this article.

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Authors Contributions

Luqman Ayanlola Atanda: conception and design of the review. **Ajibola Sunmade Gbotosho:** screening, evidence synthesis and interpretation of findings. **Opeyemi Funmilayo Balogun:** preparation and critical revision of the manuscript. All authors approved the final version and accept responsibility for the integrity and accuracy of the work.

Ethical Statement

This study relied exclusively on secondary published and publicly accessible documentary sources and did not involve the collection of personal data from human participants. Participant consent and institutional ethical clearance were therefore not applicable.

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