

## The influence of information empowerment on the performance of information specialists in Algerian university libraries

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### Résumé

Cette étude examine l'influence de l'empowerment informationnel sur la performance des spécialistes de l'information au sein des bibliothèques universitaires algériennes, dans un contexte de progrès technologique moderne. Elle évalue dans quelle mesure l'accès amélioré aux ressources essentielles, aux capacités et compétences permet à ces professionnels de gérer adroitement les défis croissants liés à la gestion de l'information. Adoptant une approche descriptive et analytique, cette recherche a recueilli des données empiriques par le biais d'une enquête distribuée à 20 spécialistes de la bibliothèque centrale de l'Université de Biskra. Les résultats révèlent une compréhension limitée de l'empowerment informationnel parmi les participants. En outre, l'étude souligne que l'éducation académique constitue un canal fondamental par lequel l'empowerment informationnel est atteint, améliorant significativement la performance professionnelle et catalysant le développement de nouveaux rôles, incluant la consultation et la médiation informationnelles.

**Mots-clés:** Empowerment, Empowerment Informationnel, Performance, Spécialiste de l'Information, Bibliothèques Académiques, Algérie

### Abstract

This study investigates the influence of information empowerment on the performance of information specialists within Algerian university libraries, amid modern technological progress. It evaluates the extent to which improved access to essential resources, capabilities, and skills enables these professionals to adeptly manage escalating challenges in information stewardship. Utilizing a descriptive-analytical approach, this research gathered empirical data through a survey distributed to 20 specialists at Biskra University's central library. Findings reveal a limited comprehension of information empowerment among the respondents. Additionally, the study highlights academic education as a fundamental channel through which information empowerment is attained, markedly enhancing professional performance and catalyzing the development of new roles, including information consultancy and mediation.

**Key Terms:** Empowerment, Information Empowerment, Performance, Information Specialist, Academic Libraries, Algeria.

## 1. Introduction

In an era marked by rapid technological advancement and an ever-increasing availability of information, the concept of information empowerment significantly influences the performance of information specialists in university libraries. Information empowerment is defined as the process through which individuals and communities acquire the necessary skills and capabilities to access and utilize information effectively, thereby achieving their objectives, enhancing their life quality, and making informed decisions. Given their crucial role as knowledge hubs and training centers, university libraries are instrumental in facilitating the information empowerment of their specialists, which in turn supports the goals of the academic institutions and the wider academic community.

This study seeks to assess the level of information empowerment awareness among these professionals and its impact on their performance, exploring the mechanisms for acquiring such empowerment.

### 1.1. Background

1. The study conducted by Lilia Moussaoui and Mohamed Menadeli (2021), entitled "Empowerment Strategies and Their Implementation Barriers in Public Administrations," offers a detailed investigation into the operationalization and challenges of empowerment initiatives within public administration contexts. Utilizing a field study methodology at the National Pedagogical Institute, and employing SPSS for data analysis, the researchers identified essential themes across the responses of participants. Their findings elucidate that empowerment can be effectively supported through initiatives in training and development, administrative backing, and the enhancement of transparency and participatory decision-making. However, they also recognized significant obstacles, such as internal resistance and entrenched bureaucratic structures, that hinder these processes.

This research contributes a nuanced perspective to the understanding of human resource management in public sectors and intersects notably with the current study by examining the broader spectrum of empowerment, particularly focusing on the implications of information empowerment for information specialists in digitally evolving environments (Moussaoui and Menadeli, 2021, pp. 663-684).

2. Similarly, Toumi Abdel Razzak's (2016) descriptive study titled "Information Culture and Its Role in Advancing the Library Profession from the Perspective of Information Specialists: A Field

Study in Oum El Bouaghi," delves into the influence of information culture on the future of the library profession. This research assesses how library and information science experts propagate information culture and its critical role in societal advancement and bridging informational divides. The findings underscore the significant impact of information culture on enhancing the library profession, aligning closely with the thematic concerns of the current study, particularly how information culture underpins professional performance and the development of competencies among information specialists (Toumi, 2016)

3. Joy Taylor's (2008) paper, "Information Awareness and Learning Resource Centers," further complements this body of literature by exploring the standards and concepts of information literacy. Taylor proposes various pedagogical strategies aimed at bolstering these skills, especially through the deployment of learning resource centers. This study highlights the pivotal skills associated with information literacy and the methodologies for instilling these competencies, paralleling the current research's focus on the extensive impacts of information empowerment on performance enhancement among university library information specialists. Together, these studies forge a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of information empowerment and literacy within academic and informational frameworks (Joy, 2008, p. 255).

## **1.2. Problem Statement:**

Information empowerment has emerged as a crucial facilitator in ensuring timely access to vital information, enhancing essential competencies, and fostering robust engagement within the academic community. This process involves a systematic exploration and application of mechanisms and methodologies that enable information specialists to adeptly navigate and surmount workplace challenges. Such strategic empowerment significantly deepens the understanding of the instrumental role that information empowerment can play in the professional development and performance optimization of information specialists. The central research question of this investigation is: What are the ramifications of information empowerment on the performance of information specialists within Algerian university libraries?

To comprehensively address this central question, it is essential to examine the following subsidiary questions:

- What is the level of cognizance regarding information empowerment among information specialists at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra?
- In what ways does information empowerment contribute to the

augmentation of performance and the advancement of skills among information specialists?

- What is the contributory role of ongoing professional development and targeted training courses in information empowerment in elevating the performance of information specialists?

### **1.3. Significance of the Study:**

This study underscores the substantial importance of exploring information empowerment and its impact on the performance of information specialists in university libraries for several compelling reasons:

- Information empowerment crucially enhances the performance of information specialists by advancing their technological proficiency and amplifying their skillsets in modern technological applications.
- It equips information specialists to adeptly navigate the challenges inherent in the digital era.
- Information empowerment promotes a synergistic interaction between information specialists and their operational environments, fostering a more integrated workplace.
- It significantly boosts the efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery, thereby facilitating the attainment of the strategic objectives of academic institutions.

### **1.4. Objectives of the Study:**

The primary aims of this research are to:

- Elucidate the concept of information empowerment and evaluate the awareness level among information specialists regarding its essence within the study's context.
- Examine the influence of information empowerment on improving and advancing the professional standards of information specialists.
- Highlight the critical role of ongoing professional development and training courses in cultivating information empowerment among information specialists, focusing on their proficiency with modern technologies and their application in enhancing job performance.
- Investigate the extent to which information specialists utilize information empowerment in executing their professional duties and roles.

**1.5. Methodology:**

**1.5.1. Study Approach:**

In alignment with the nature of this inquiry and its central question concerning the impact of information empowerment on the performance of information specialists in Algerian university libraries, the study adopts a scientific approach defined as "the pathway to uncovering truths through systematic rules, leading to definitive results" (Abu Chanab, 2016, p. 396). The necessity of the research design mandates the use of a descriptive methodology, which is particularly appropriate for studies of this nature.

**1.5.2. Data Collection Tools:**

For data collection in this research, a questionnaire served as the primary instrument. Characterized as a structured format containing targeted questions directed at respondents, the questionnaire is extensively used in descriptive studies. Its deployment is renowned for its efficiency in terms of time, cost, and effort, substantially facilitating data processing (Abu Chanab, 2016, pp. 146-147). This tool is particularly effective for obtaining primary and field-specific data that are crucial for addressing the research question or exploring the phenomenon under study (Bachiouh, 2009, p. 32).

**1.5.3. Study Population and Sample:**

The research was carried out with information specialists from the central library of Mohamed Khider University of Biskra, comprising a total of 20 participants. This group constituted the entire sample for data collection and detailed exploration of the study's themes. This is shown in the following table:

**Table No. 01:** Characteristics of the study sample.

Variable	The Topic	Repetition	Percentage	t (test)
Sex	male	07	35 %	7
	feminine	13	65 %	7,11666
<b>The Total</b>		20	100 %	/
Educational level	Doctorate	01	05 %	2,8
	Master	07	35 %	5,06666
	Bachelor's D.	08	40 %	11,4333
	Applied studies	04	20 %	4,33333
<b>The Total</b>		20	100 %	/
Scientific Specialization	Libraries	14	70 %	11,4333
	Automated, N.	06	30 %	7
<b>The Total</b>		20	100 %	/

<b>Professional Experience</b>	Less than 05	04	20 %	8,2
	From 06 to 10	12	60 %	5,4
	More than 11	04	20 %	5,66666
<b>The Total</b>		20	100 %	/

**Source:** Table prepared by researchers

Through the results expressed in the previous table revealed analysis of the sample revealed a gender distribution of 65% female and 35% male, a discrepancy that could be attributed to socio-cultural factors influencing career choices within specialized fields. The majority of participants, representing 75% of the sample, held bachelor's degrees, signifying a high level of formal education among the specialists. In terms of field specialization, 70% were engaged in library science, while the remaining 30% worked in information technology, indicating a pronounced focus on information management disciplines. Regarding experience, the majority (60%) had been in the field for 6 to 10 years, indicating either career stability or professional advancement over time. These insights will contribute to a more nuanced analysis of how information empowerment affects the performance of university library information specialists.

## **1.6. Key Concepts for the Study:**

### **1.6.1. Empowerment:**

Empowerment, from the root "empower," refers to the process of enhancing an individual's ability to undertake greater responsibilities through training, trust, and emotional support (Rahmin & Kawachi, 2022, p. 684). It encompasses the strengthening of an individual's capabilities and cultural awareness, facilitating deeper integration into professional roles through skills development, confidence boosting, and substantial support (Rahmin & Kawachi, 2022, p. 685).

### **1.6.2. Information Literacy:**

Information literacy involves recognizing the value of information and effectively utilizing it to navigate and solve informational challenges, fulfill research needs, and achieve informational maturity. It requires harnessing individual capabilities to meet contemporary demands and progress toward advanced stages of information proficiency (Association des Bibliothécaires Française, 2003, p. 266).

**1.6.3. Performance:**

In the context of library science, performance is defined as the systematic and effective application of librarians' skills to meet and exceed established standards of efficiency and quality. It involves fulfilling specific responsibilities aimed at improving the library's service and performance through optimal skill utilization within a defined timeframe (Al-Chdiefat, 2014, p. 307).

Additionally, performance can be understood as the specialist's ability to execute professional responsibilities efficiently, influenced by their competency, the environmental conditions, and the integration of their knowledge, values, and skills to effectively contribute to the institution's goals (Saleh, 2011, p. 245).

**1.6.4. Information Specialist:**

The term "information specialist" includes a range of roles within the field of information science, such as Knowledge Engineer, Information Adviser, Information Manager, and Cybrarian. These roles involve activities related to the analysis, study, design, and implementation of information systems. Information specialists also manage traditional and digital information resources and are involved in the administration of various information centers and the education of information science (Al-Kamichi, 2013, p. 271).

**1.6.5. University Libraries:**

University libraries are institutions established, funded, and managed by universities with the specific purpose of supporting the academic needs of students, faculty, and staff. They are integral to the educational objectives of the institution, providing access to scholarly resources and fostering an environment conducive to academic research and learning (Al-Madadeha, 2011).

**1.6.6. Information Empowerment for Information Specialists:**

Information empowerment for information specialists involves equipping these professionals with the essential capabilities, skills, and resources necessary for effective information and data management. This empowerment is facilitated through continuous training and development in technical, administrative, and communicative skills. Additionally, it includes access to vital informational resources and proficient use of technology for gathering, analyzing, organizing, and disseminating information. The objective of information empowerment is to enable specialists to independently and effectively achieve their professional goals within the rapidly evolving contexts of the knowledge and technology era (Ben Ahmed & Marif, 2022, p. 87).



## 2. Results And Discussion:

### 2.1. Comprehension of Information Empowerment among Information Specialists:

The concept of information empowerment is essential for information specialists navigating the rapidly evolving digital landscape, marked by accelerated technological advancements and an expanding reservoir of data and information. For these professionals, a deep understanding of information empowerment encompasses the analytical capacity to discern the informational needs of individuals, communities, and institutions. Additionally, it involves equipping these specialists with the requisite tools and resources that enable streamlined and effective access to and utilization of information. This is expressed by the study sample through the results of the following table:

**Table No. 02:** shows the two researchers' knowledge of the concept of information empowerment

Answer Options	Repetition	Percentage	T (Test)
Ability to identify information needs	05	25	01
The ability to interact with sources of information	04	20	0,8
Proficiency in using modern applications	08	40	1,6
Assess and identify information needs	03	15	0,6
The Total	<b>20</b>	<b>100%</b>	/

**Source:** Table prepared by researchers

This was clearly stated from above a significant portion of the participants, 40%, associate information empowerment with proficiency in modern applications, emphasizing the necessity of developing critical skills to keep pace with ongoing professional advancements. This perspective is quantitatively supported by a T-test value of 1.6, which significantly surpasses the standard normative value of 0.4, indicating a moderate discrepancy. Moreover, 25% of the participants connect information empowerment with the capability to precisely identify informational needs, demonstrating an acute awareness of the imperative to meet these needs accurately and acquire the appropriate skills for effective information retrieval. The T-test value associated with this viewpoint is below the expected standard, denoting a minimal difference. Conversely, 20% of the respondents believe that information



empowerment also includes the ability to effectively interact with and access information sources, as evidenced by a T-test value of 0.8 that matches the table value of 0.2, suggesting an absence of significant variance.

Lastly, the remaining 15% of participants, with a T-test value of 0.6—exceeding the normative value of 0.15—consider information empowerment as encompassing the assessment and precise determination of informational needs, underscoring the critical role of ongoing evaluation and knowledge-driven decision-making in their professional activities.

## 2.2. Information Empowerment Services for Information Specialists:

In the modern era of informatics, information specialists are crucial in enabling both institutions and communities to capitalize fully on the information available. For effective information empowerment, these professionals must possess a diverse skill set that includes advanced communication abilities, professional competence, technological proficiency, and organizational skills. These skills are essential not only for meeting the evolving demands of users but also for enhancing the specialists' effectiveness and their impact on organizational goals. The information specialists under study expressed their opinions about the services provided by information empowerment to information specialists through the results expressed in the following table:

**Table No. 03:** Shows the information empowerment skills of information specialists

Information mastery services	Repetition	Percentage	T (Test)
Professional services	6	30	1,2
Technology services	4	20	0,8
Communication services	7	35	1,4
Organizational and administrative services	3	15	0,6
<b>The Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>/</b>

**Source:** Table prepared by researchers

The study participants discussed various services provided by information empowerment, noting differences in how these services are valued. About 35% of respondents emphasized the importance of communication skills, essential for the effective exchange of knowledge and information utilization, with a T-test value of 1.4

indicating a moderate difference above the normative value of 0.35. Approximately 30% highlighted professional services as a key component of empowerment, with a T-test value of 1.2 indicating a moderate difference above the normative value 0.3. This suggests that these services exceed typical expectations and are crucial for the development of robust informational and research competencies. Additionally, 20% pointed to the necessity of fundamental technological skills, critical in the current technological landscape, with a 0.8 T-test value indicating a moderate difference above the normative value 0.2 reflecting a moderate difference.

Lastly, 15% identified organizational and administrative skills as pivotal, with their importance underscored by a 0.6 T-test value that suggests these skills significantly contribute to effective information management and strategic usage planning.

### 2.3. Utilizing Information Empowerment: Essential Considerations and Impacts:

Utilizing information empowerment necessitates a profound understanding that is facilitated by access to information and knowledge, crucial for informed decision-making. Information empowerment significantly enhances innovation and drives development across various fields, contributing to sustainable growth on both individual and collective levels, This is what the researchers expressed through the following table:

**Table No. 04:** Shows the benefit from information empowerment

<b>Benefit from information empowerment</b>	<b>Repetition</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>T (Test)</b>
The ability to create effective performance	05	25	0,25
Ability to develop performance	09	45	0,45
Ability to retain information	03	15	0,15
The ability to market information	03	15	0,15
<b>The Total</b>	20	100%	/

**Source:** Table prepared by researchers

The findings indicate that effective information utilization requires specific competencies, as 45% of participants believe that deploying information empowerment necessitates the ability to modify and improve performance. This perspective is supported by a T-test value of 0.45, which is significantly lower than the

benchmark value of 1.8, indicating a moderate difference. Furthermore, 25% of participants emphasize the need for efficiency in performance, corroborated by a T-test value of 0.25, below the benchmark of 1, suggesting a negligible difference.

Additionally, 15% view the capability to market information as integral to information empowerment, as indicated by a T-test value of 0.15, higher than the benchmark of 0.6, confirming the absence of a moderate difference. This implies a necessity for proficiency in retaining collected information, achievable through both human memory and various technological tools.

#### 2.4. Methods for Acquiring Information Empowerment Among Information Specialists:

There are multiple avenues for acquiring information empowerment that are instrumental in developing the requisite skills and capabilities needed to fully leverage the data and information available in today's digital era. Academic education stands out as a primary pathway for attaining information empowerment, with lifelong learning playing an integral role in this process. This approach facilitates the continual enhancement of an individual's skills and knowledge through targeted training courses and hands-on workshops. Additionally, self-directed learning emerges as a potent method for information empowerment, enabling individuals to utilize online resources, books, and scholarly articles to enrich their knowledge base and advance their skills across diverse areas. This is expressed by the sample under study through the following table:

**Table No. 05:** Shows ways to gain information empowerment for information specialists

Ways to gain information empowerment	Repetition	Percentage	T (Test)
Academic education	10	50	0,5
Continuous formation	06	30	0,3
self education	04	20	0,2
<b>The Total</b>	20	100 %	/

**Source:** Table prepared by researchers

The study sample reveals that 50% of participants consider academic education as the principal method for acquiring information empowerment, viewing it as essential for establishing a comprehensive empowerment framework. This view is reflected in a T-test value of 0.5, which is significantly lower than the benchmark

of 2, suggesting no moderate difference. In addition, 30% attribute their acquisition of information empowerment to ongoing training, highlighting the significance of continuous professional development in enhancing their informational capabilities. This importance is underscored by a T-test value of 0.3, considerably below the benchmark of 1.2, indicating a negligible difference.

Finally, 20% of respondents credit self-directed learning as their method of gaining information empowerment, relying on personal initiatives to enhance their capabilities. They actively engage in self-education through available online resources, books, and articles to expand their knowledge and skill sets. This method is validated by a T-test value of 0.2, much lower than the benchmark of 0.8, demonstrating no moderate difference.

### 2.5. Core Components of Continuous Training and Development Programs:

Continuous training and development programs are crucial for enhancing the skills of information specialists and boosting their performance in the ever-evolving workplace. These programs encompass a variety of training events and modules aimed at refining the technical, personal, and communication skills of information specialists. Training topics range from mastering modern technology and software to honing interpersonal and effective communication skills, positioning these programs as essential tools for capacity building. This is what the researchers expressed in the following table:

**Table No. 06:** shows the topics of continuous training and training courses

Continuous training axes	Repetition	Percentage	T (Test)
Use of documentary software	12	60	0,6
Design and build databases	02	10	0,5
Use of Internet services	02	10	0,1
Creating Digital Entities	04	20	0,2
<b>The Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>%100</b>	<b>/</b>

**Source:** Table prepared by researchers

According to the study findings, training in documentary software management is deemed most critical, as indicated by 60% of the participants from the central library at the University of Biskra. This preference is highlighted by a T-test value of 0.6, significantly lower than the benchmark value of 2.4, suggesting a minimal

difference. Furthermore, 20% of participants prioritized training in creating digital entities, with a T-test value lower than the benchmark of 0.4, confirming the absence of a significant difference. Less prevalent were topics such as database design and internet services applications, each attracting 10% of the focus.

**2.6. Emerging Roles for Information Specialists Amidst Information Empowerment:**

Information empowerment fosters the emergence of new roles that enhance the contributions of information specialists within dynamic work environments. These roles include big data analytics, digital transformation facilitation, and pivotal contributions to the development of information security strategies and data protection. Through the results expressed in the following table:

**Table No. 07:** Shows the new roles granted by information empowerment

New roles	Repetition	Percentage	T (Test)
Information consultant	03	15	0,2
Documentary mediator	06	30	06
Information wise	04	20	04
Information specialist	07	35	07
<b>The Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>/</b>

**Source:** Table prepared by researchers

The survey results reveal that 35% of researchers view information specialists as crucial in managing information and addressing the informational needs of users, a figure substantially higher than the benchmark value of 1.4, which confirms a moderate difference. Additionally, 30% of respondents see information empowerment as enabling specialists to serve as intermediaries between information resources and users, especially as user needs become more complex. This role is supported by a T-test value higher than the benchmark of 1.2, suggesting a moderate difference and underscoring the necessity for mediative roles to ease communication. Moreover, 20% of participants recognize specialists as vigilant monitors of information trends, evidenced by a T-test value of 4, surpassing the benchmark of 0.8, which indicates a moderate difference.

Lastly, 15% of respondents believe that information empowerment has enabled specialists to take on consultancy roles, due to the increasing complexity of user needs and the introduction of new services. This is reflected by a T-test value of 0.2, below the

benchmark of 0.6, indicating an absence of a moderate difference.

**2.7. The Impact of Information Empowerment on the Tasks and Roles of Information Specialists:**

Information specialists play a crucial role in efficiently collecting, analyzing, and organizing information to fulfill the objectives of users and institutions. Information empowerment is pivotal in this context, enabling specialists to fully leverage available technologies and tools to enhance their performance and refine their skills. This study examines how information empowerment influences the responsibilities and functions of these professionals. The sample of researchers expressed the impact of information empowerment on the tasks and roles of the information specialist through the results shown in the following table:

**Table No. 08:** Shows the impact of information empowerment on the tasks and roles of the information specialist

Answer options	Repetition	Percentage	T (Test)
Upgrading the roles of information specialists	07	35	0,35
Relying more on the information specialist	03	15	0,15
Raising the professional level of information specialists	10	50	0,5
<b>The Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>/</b>

**Source:** Table prepared by researchers

Survey data indicates that 50% of participants view information empowerment as a means to elevate the professional standards of information specialists by focusing on vocational education within their field. This result, with a T-test value of 0.5, significantly under the benchmark value of 2, suggests a negligible difference. Additionally, 35% of participants believe that information empowerment enriches the roles of information specialists, supported by a T-test value of 0.35, below the benchmark of 1.4. This aligns with the study's core objectives. Lastly, 15% of respondents acknowledge that information empowerment heightens institutional and governmental demand for information specialists, indicated by a T-test value of 0.15, lower than the benchmark of 0.6, showing no significant difference.

### 3. Study Results:

This field survey evaluated information specialists' understanding of information empowerment, their methods of acquiring it, and its role in enhancing their professional performance at the central library of Mohamed Khider University of Biskra. The principal findings include:

- Insufficient awareness and understanding of the concept of information empowerment, often narrowly associated with technological culture. Information empowerment is a comprehensive blend of knowledge, skills, and experiences beyond mere technological proficiency
- The majority of specialists acquire information empowerment through academic education, which serves as the primary method. Continuous training and self-learning also play vital roles in enhancing and extending information empowerment.
- The degree of information empowerment among specialists is influenced by the library's resources and access to advanced research tools, motivating continual skill and proficiency enhancement.
- The university library undertakes continuous training and organizes developmental courses to keep pace with evolving professional demands affecting information specialists.
- Information empowerment significantly improves the professional performance of information specialists, thereby enhancing the library's operational efficacy and meeting its users' evolving needs.
- Information empowerment fosters new roles and functions for information specialists, notably in consulting and information mediation.

### 4. Conclusion:

The importance of information empowerment in augmenting the performance of information specialists in university libraries lies in its capacity to reinforce their pivotal role in academic research and education. By facilitating access to information sources and utilizing diverse technological tools in search and retrieval operations, information empowerment enhances the quality of services provided to the academic community. Moreover, it supports the development of research, analytical, and communication skills, thus promoting professional and operational advancement. With the increasing pace of technological developments in a digital-first environment, information empowerment is indispensable for information specialists to address challenges effectively and contribute meaningfully to the university library's mission and its service to the



academic community.

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