

Repository as a Source of Information on Students' Study Completion Process (Case Study of IAIN Parepare Students)

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ABSTRACT:

Background: Final-year students often struggle to find and integrate relevant scientific information for their theses. Institutional repositories offer a curated source of information that can potentially aid in the completion of their studies, but their utilization is still under-optimal.

Aims: This study aims to analyze students' information search strategies through the IAIN Parepare repository and to interpret how the information found is used to facilitate the completion of the thesis.

Methods: The research used a qualitative case study approach, involving final-year students of IAIN Parepare through in-depth interviews, observation, repository searches, and documentation. Data were analyzed using the Miles & Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.

Result: The results of the study indicate that students experience difficulties in the early stages of thesis writing, particularly in determining theories and methods, and finding writing examples. The repository helps reduce uncertainty in information searches, provides relevant thesis references, and makes it easier for students to understand the writing structure according to academic guidelines. The students' search process aligns with Kuhlthau's ISP theory, Wilson's Information Behavior, and Ellis and Marchionini's information search model.

Conclusion: Institutional repositories play a strategic role in improving information literacy, facilitating the thesis writing process, and supporting students in completing their studies. They serve not only as reference providers but also as effective learning tools that strengthen students' academic abilities.

Keywords: Institutional Repository; Information Search; Study Completion

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INTRODUCTION

Completion of studies is a crucial phase in a student's academic journey because it determines graduation and readiness to enter the professional world (Nurmasari, 2024; Simanullang et al., 2024; Sugitanata et al., 2024). At this stage, students are required to possess strong information literacy skills to support the preparation of scientific papers such as theses, which require high-quality, relevant, and easily accessible references. In the digital era, the need for fast and credible information is increasing, making the availability of digital information sources a crucial factor in streamlining the student's study process (Hamidah et al., 2023; Lahagu & Lahagu, 2024; Zainal et al., 2024).

Although digitalization has made information easier to access, a gap remains between ideal practices and real-world conditions. Ideally, students utilize institutional repositories as primary reference sources, providing curated scholarly works such as theses, journals, and research reports. However, some IAIN Parepare students remain unaware of the repository's crucial role, and some are even unaware of its existence. Barriers such as limited digital literacy, internet access, and low interest in utilizing repositories contribute to this gap.

Despite these gaps, repositories actually offer significant opportunities to support students' academic success. The IAIN Parepare repository, which has been operating since 2018, boasts thousands of scholarly works that are freely accessible through the campus e-library and serves as a crucial tool for expediting the reference search process. The availability of structured digital content, relevant to thesis writing needs, and user-friendly accessibility make the repository a potential resource that has not been optimally utilized by students, thus deserving further study (Fathirma'ruf et al., 2022; Malihah et al., 2024a; Muslim, 2023).

A number of previous studies have indeed examined the use of repositories at various universities, but most of them only highlight the level of knowledge, attitudes, or perceptions of students (Elena & Song, 2021; Eno & Krismayani, 2024). There is little research specifically describing how final-year students use information-seeking strategies and how the quality of information found through repositories influences their study completion process. In the context of IAIN Parepare, no study has yet examined in-depth the stages of information seeking (initiation to presentation) and the integration of information received by students. This presents a new area and a research gap that this study aims to address.

The repository was chosen as the primary variable because its existence is an integral part of digital library services, serving as a medium for disseminating scientific knowledge on campus. Unlike general information sources on the internet, the repository provides local content that is credible, authoritative, and in accordance with the institution's academic standards (Aulia & Salim, 2023; Pattiwael, 2018; Toyibah et al., 2025). Repositories also fulfill the functions of preservation, organization, and access to knowledge that are essential for students, especially those writing their theses. Thus, repositories are a strategic variable for assessing how they assist students in completing their studies.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyse the information-seeking strategies of final-year students using the IAIN Parepare institutional repository, and to examine how the obtained information is utilised to facilitate study completion. By focusing on students' lived experiences and search behaviours, this research makes a theoretical contribution by extending information-seeking models into the context of institutional repositories. It also makes a practical contribution by providing evidence-based recommendations for optimising repository services as active tools in supporting students' academic success.

METHOD

Research Design

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study, aiming to gain a deeper understanding of the use of institutional repositories as a source of information for students at IAIN Parepare. Qualitative research was chosen because it allows researchers to explore phenomena in a naturalistic manner, making them key instruments in the data collection, interpretation, and analysis process (Gammelgaard, 2017; Kodithuwakku, 2022; McQueen et al., 2023). The case study design is used to examine phenomena that occur in a specific context, namely final year students who utilize repositories in compiling their theses.

Participant

Participants in this study were active students of IAIN Parepare, class of 2018–2019, currently in the thesis writing phase. Participants were selected based on their direct involvement in the academic reference search process and utilization of the campus repository. Participants were selected because they were deemed most relevant and had direct experience using repositories as a source of information for completing their studies.

Population and the methods of sampling

The study population included all IAIN Parepare students who were in the process of writing their theses during the year the study was conducted. The sampling technique used purposive sampling, which selects participants based on certain criteria, including:

1. Active final year students
2. have or are currently accessing the IAIN Parepare repository, and
3. willing to be a research informant.

This technique was chosen to obtain in-depth information from participants who understood the research context. Because the research was qualitative, no psychometric measurement instruments such as quantitative validity or reliability tests were used; however, data validity was maintained through triangulation and member checking techniques as described in the research procedures.

Instrument

The main research instrument is the researcher himself as the key instrument, assisted by supporting instruments in the form of:

- In-depth interview guidelines, containing a list of questions related to information search strategies, experience using repositories, and use of information in compiling a thesis.
- Observation sheet, to record repository browsing activities.
- Documentation, in the form of screenshots of repository usage, examples of search results, and digital collection archives.

This instrument was designed to collect holistic data regarding students' information-seeking behavior and the integration of information obtained from repositories.

Procedures and time frame

Data collection was conducted at IAIN Parepare after approval was granted for the institutional research. This involved initially observing repository use, conducting semi-structured interviews with selected participants and documenting repository-related activities. The credibility of the data was ensured through triangulation of data sources and member checking, which allowed participants to confirm the accuracy of the interpretations.

Analysis plan

Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model of qualitative analysis, which includes:

1. Data reduction, namely selecting, grouping, and focusing on findings that are relevant to the research.
2. Data presentation, in the form of descriptive narratives, tables of findings, and interview quotes to provide a complete picture of the information search and utilization process.
3. Drawing conclusions, carried out repeatedly to ensure consistency and validity of the findings(Asipi et al., 2022; Catherine Houghton, 2014; Ernawati et al., 2022), and understand the role of repositories in completing student studies.

Analysis is carried out simultaneously from the time the data is collected until all the information is completely organized.

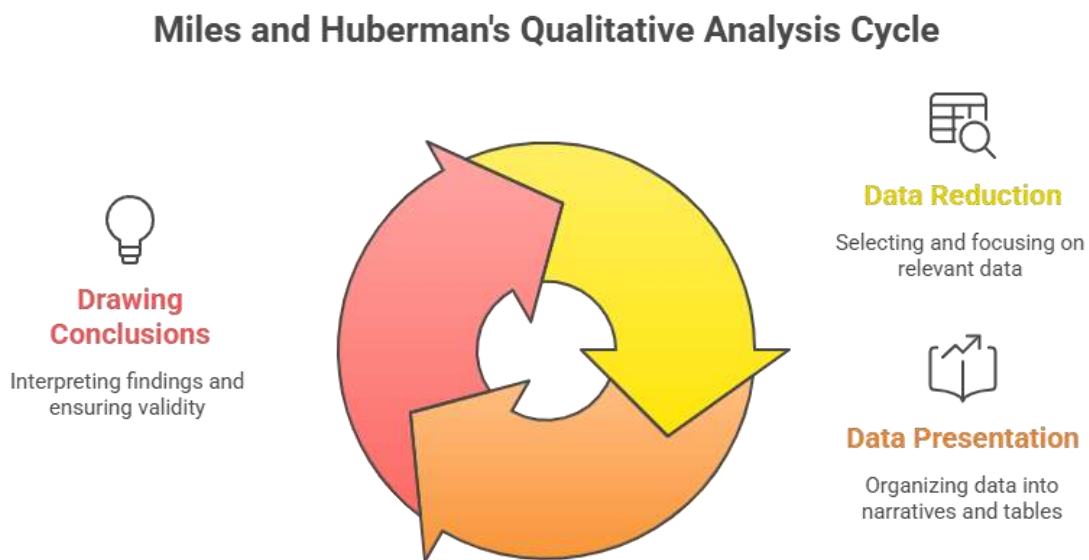


Figure 1.1 data analysis

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Data collected through in-depth interviews, observations and documentation suggests that final-year students at IAIN Parepare have significant information needs during the thesis-writing process. These needs are particularly acute in the early stages of researching a topic, selecting a theoretical framework, deciding on a research method and identifying previous studies. All participants reported that locating relevant, academically appropriate references was one of the most challenging aspects of preparing their theses.

Further empirical evidence shows that students initially relied on general internet sources. However, many encountered difficulties because the retrieved materials did not conform to institutional academic guidelines. Consequently, participants shifted their information-seeking activities towards the institutional repository. Features such as faculty-based categorisation and systematic file organisation enabled students to locate theses relevant to their research topics more efficiently.

Interview data revealed that the repository provided access to theses that adhered to official institutional writing standards. Participants consistently stated that they used these documents as concrete references for understanding thesis structure, formatting and methodological presentation. Analysis of documentation confirmed that students frequently accessed theses from the repository when revising their own work, particularly in sections related to research methods and literature reviews.

Additionally, observational data showed that using the repository reduced the need for trial and error when it came to formatting and referencing. Students reported fewer technical errors after consulting repository materials, particularly with regard to citation style, chapter organisation and alignment with institutional guidelines.

The empirical findings suggest that the institutional repository serves as both a source of academic references and a practical guide for writing theses. Students did more than just retrieve information; they actively used repository content to model writing structure and methodological presentation. Their consistent use of repository-based theses suggests that students perceive the repository as a more reliable and authoritative academic resource than open web sources.

Overall, the results demonstrate that the IAIN Parepare institutional repository plays a central role in supporting students' thesis completion processes by facilitating focused information searches, providing standardized academic examples, and reducing uncertainty during critical stages of thesis development.

Discussion

The findings of this study have important implications for various parties, particularly institutions and university libraries. For institutions, the results confirm that institutional repositories are a strategic element in the digital academic ecosystem, serving not only as a repository for scholarly works but also as an effective learning resource for students. Therefore, institutions need to improve the quality of repository services through content management, collection updates, and support for easier and faster access. Meanwhile, for libraries, navigation structure, scholarly work grouping, and metadata quality have been shown to significantly impact the effectiveness of student information searches (Melati et al., 2025; Saufa & Hidayah, 2018; Suwanto, 2017). This indicates that repository design and management must continue to be developed to be more responsive to user needs and optimally support the thesis writing process.

This research's theoretical contribution lies in strengthening empirical evidence that the information-seeking behavior of final-year students in Indonesia aligns with international information-seeking theories, such as the Kuhlthau, Wilson, Ellis, and Marchionini models. This research enriches the academic literature by demonstrating how students not only search for

information but also strategically integrate it into the structure of their thesis writing. In a practical context, this research provides an academic foundation for the development of user-oriented repository service policies, while also filling a research gap related to the use of repositories as a means of supporting study completion in Islamic universities (Kartikasari & Farhan, 2025; Malihah et al., 2024b; Siahaan & Purba, 2019).

However, this study has several limitations that should be considered. The study was conducted at only one institution, so the findings cannot be generalized to all higher education institutions without further study. Furthermore, the use of qualitative interview-based methods makes the findings highly dependent on the subjectivity of the informants. This study also did not evaluate technical aspects of the repository, such as access speed, interface quality, or system reliability, even though these aspects have the potential to influence the user experience in information retrieval. These limitations indicate that there is still ample room for further research in this area.

Based on these limitations, several suggestions can be put forward for further research and for the development of the repository itself. Future research is recommended to involve more universities to provide a more comprehensive picture of student information-seeking behavior nationally. A quantitative or mixed methods approach can be used to measure the repository's effectiveness more systematically and objectively. From an institutional perspective, information literacy training needs to be strengthened so students can maximize the repository's use. Furthermore, developing additional features such as automated recommendations, advanced filtering, or integration with campus academic systems could help improve ease of access and the quality of the user experience.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the institutional repository at IAIN Parepare plays a crucial role in supporting the completion of final-year students' studies. Students who initially experienced difficulties in determining theories, methods, and writing formats were assisted by access to previously written theses that were neatly structured, relevant, and in accordance with the campus's KTI guidelines. The repository provides credible and organized information, thereby reducing uncertainty in information retrieval, facilitating systematic searches, and helping students integrate references into their thesis writing structure. This demonstrates that the repository is not only a digital storage center but also an effective learning tool in building academic information literacy.

Furthermore, this study confirms that students' information-seeking behavior is consistent with various global theories, such as those of Kuhlthau, Wilson, Ellis, and Marchionini. Repositories have been shown to accommodate students' information needs according to the search patterns described by these experts, ranging from reducing uncertainty, providing credible sources, facilitating browsing and differentiation, to supporting learning through observation of scientific work examples. Thus, the existence of repositories has strategic implications for institutions to continuously improve the quality of digital academic services and strengthen students' abilities to complete final assignments effectively and independently.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

RM served as the lead author, designing the research design, conducting data collection, analyzing the findings, and writing the initial draft of the manuscript. NK contributed to the methodological review, validation of the research results, and refinement of the argumentation structure and accuracy of the manuscript's content. MTS contributed to academic supervision, critical review of the data analysis, and substantive revisions to the discussion and implications sections, as well as alignment of the manuscript with scientific publication standards. All three authors worked collaboratively in finalizing the manuscript and approved the resulting version.

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