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Information-Seeking Behavior of Law Practitioners: A Survey of Bahawalpur City

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Introduction

The concept of life is vague without information. Information has enabled a man to perform his routine activities in an efficient way. For decision-making, we need the support of information (Kumar, 2004). Modern society depends on information for all its activities. Every person has the need for information. Without valid and up-to-date information, it is impossible to do progress in any field of life (Bajpai, 1999). Understanding of information needs and information-seeking behavior of various professional groups is essential as it helps in the planning, implementation and operation of information system and services in the given work settings (Devadason & Lingam, 1997). Legal information is basic to all, both lawyers and non-lawyers. The law is supposed to be understood and used by each and every citizen (Otike, 1997). Lawyers are individuals who have a wide range of responsibilities and duties when it comes to their profession. Their role in society is even more important as they are acting as a voice for others (Exforsys, 2010). In today's world, legal issues spring up almost always on a regular basis. Most probably, one does not have the time to handle all of them. Having a lawyer to take care of one's legal affair is very much required and it is one sure way to get free from unnecessary headaches (Hood, 2006). Lawyers are the protectors of the people. They play a very important role in maintaining order in one place. In addition, a number of positions in the government are being held by lawyers. Thus, they contribute in providing and regulating peace in the community (Buzzle, 2010).

Research Methodology and Data Collection Approach

Survey of the lawyer's community at District Bar Council, Bahawalpur was conducted by the researcher and data were collected with the help of a structured,

peer-reviewed and pilot-tested questionnaire. Seventy questionnaires were distributed among the lawyers for data collection and 54 questionnaires were filled out by the lawyers. The response rate was 77 %. Due to the busy schedule of the lawyers, the researcher faced difficulty in data collection. The collected data were analyzed through SPSS software version 14.

The main objectives of the study were to investigate:

1. For what purpose, lawyers search for information?
2. What are the information seeking habits of lawyers?
3. From where do they generally get information resources?
4. What do they do in case of urgent need of information?
5. What is the impact of ICT on information seeking behavior of the lawyers?

Important Research Questions

- What are the actual information needs of the lawyers community?
- What kind of information is sought by them?
- What methods are used for seeking information?
- What is the users' response towards new information and communication technologies?
- What is the current state of provision of various kinds of library services? And is that well responsive to the changing needs of its lawyers community?
- What are the problems of seeking information and how it can be solved?
- What are types of reading material available in the library and does it satisfy its community's needs effectively?
- What is users' information sources preference and do the library staff familiar with it?
- What are the study places preferences by them?
- What kinds of difficulties faced by lawyers in the process of seeking information (print and non-print)?

Review of the Studies on Information Seeking Behavior of Lawyers

There are several studies conducted at international level to examine the information needs and information seeking behavior of lawyers. This section will briefly review the studies on information seeking behavior of lawyers for gaining a better understanding of lawyers' information seeking behavior.

Kuhlthau & Tama (2001) explored the information search process of lawyers. Findings revealed that these lawyers frequently were involved in complex tasks and to accomplish these complex tasks, they preferred printed texts over computer databases primarily because computer databases required well-specified requests and did not offer an option for examining a wide range of information at one time.

Makri (2009) in his doctoral thesis studied lawyer's information behavior leading to the development of two methods for evaluating electronic resources. Overall, findings were positive regarding both methods and useful suggestions for improving the methods were made.

Otike (2000) explored the legal information needs of lawyers in Kenya. It was noted that a lawyer's work is determined by the legal needs of the clients, which, in turn, influences the information needs of the lawyer. The lawyers seek assistance from the High Court library or collections in other law firms.

Hinson et. al (2007) pointed out that seventy-eight percent of the lawyers were found agreed that the internet improves their productivity. Eighty-eight per cent of respondents indicated that the internet is useful as a communication tool, whilst 76

percent of the respondents considered the internet to be very important for getting information.

Otike (1997) in his study investigated the legal information needs of the general public. He concluded that the provision of legal information to the public in the Third World still remains largely unresearched. Until extensive empirical research is conducted in this vast area, information professionals will continue to rely heavily on simple hypotheses.

In (2002) he searched out the information needs and seeking habits of lawyers in England in the United Kingdom. The purpose of the study was to ascertain the type of information lawyers require to meet their needs and to determine the factors that influence their information needs and seeking hbits. It was noted that experience has a considerable influence on their needs. experienced lawyers do not require as much information support as newly qualified lawyers. Findings showed that lawyers rely heavily on printed media. Elctronic medai is used only as a last resort.

Wilkinson (2001) studied information sources used by lawyers in problem solving. It was found that the lawyers overwhelmingly preferred informal sources when seeking information. In addition, they preferred sources of information internal to their organizations rather than external sources.

Eisenschitz and Walsh (1995) studied on lawyers' attitudes towards information. In analyzing results, the researcher found a difference in user's behavior when solicitors were conducting known item searches and subject searches. In the case of subject search, the solicitor's expertise could be more useful for evaluating the utility of found materials rather than doing the research himself.

Hainsworth (1992) traced that appellate judges do not trust and are skeptical of the information provided to them. Judges have particular needs with regards to organizing information which are not met by any system. Judges prefer hard copy and their information seeking is affected by time.

Interpretation of Data and Discussions

Data were collected through the distribution of questionnaires among the lawyers of District Bar Association Session Court Bahawalpur. Fifty four questionnaires have been analyzed below.

Personal Profile of the Respondents

First part of the questionnaire was consisting on personal profile of the respondents. It collected information on gender, age, qualification and professional experience and number of books and articles published by the respondents.

Gender of the Respondents

In total 54 respondents responded against the questionnaire, of which 39 (72.2%) were male and 15 (27.8%) were female (Table 1).

Table 1

Frequency Distribution of Respondent's Gender

Sr.	Gender	Frequency	Percent
1.	Male	39	72.2

2.	Female	15	27.8
	Total	54	100

Age of the Respondents

Seven (13.0%) respondents were between 21 to 30 years, 27 (50%) were between 31 to 40 years, 14 (25.9%) were between 41 to 50 years, five (9.3%) were between 51 to 60 years, while one (1.9%) respondent was between 61 to 70 years old.

Table 2

Frequency Distribution of Respondent's Age

Sr.	Age	Frequency	Percent
1.	21-30	7	13.0
2.	31-40	27	50.0
3.	41-50	14	25.9
4.	51-60	5	9.3
5.	61-70	1	1.9
	Total	54	100.0

Academic Qualification of the Respondents

Frequency distribution of respondents' academic qualification presented in Table 3, shows that thirty one (57.4%) were B.A LLB, nineteen (35.2%) were M.A LLB, two of the respondents (3.7%) were MLL and two (3.7%) were MSC LLB.

Table 3

Frequency Distribution of Respondent's Qualification

Sr.	Qualification	Frequency	Percent
1.	B.A LLB	31	57.4
2.	M.A LLB	19	35.2

3.	MLL	2	3.7
4.	MSC LLB	2	3.7
	Total	54	100.0

Professional Experience

Frequency distribution of the respondents' experience category shows that 18 (33.3%) respondents had professional experience between 1-5 years, 14 (25.9%) between 6-10 years, 9 (16.7%) were between 11-15 years, six (11.1%) were between 16-20 years, one (1.9%) was between 21-25 years, 2 (3.7%) were between 26-30 years and three (5.6%) were having experience more than thirty years (Table 4).

Table 4

Frequency Distribution of Respondent's Professional Experience

Sr.	Experience	Frequency	Percent
1.	1-5	18	33.3
2.	6-10	14	25.9
3.	11-15	9	16.7
4.	16-20	6	11.1
5.	21-25	1	1.9
6.	26-30	2	3.7
7.	31-onwards	3	5.6
	Total	54	100.0

Publications by the Respondents

Respondents were asked to mention the number of any publications i.e., books and papers published by them. But none of the respondent has published any book or paper.

Information Needs and Seeking Behavior of the Respondents

Vickery (1970) & Sharma (1992) stated that understanding the user is half battle in

providing information-services. The key operation is to select from the store the information needed by a particular user at a particular time. Different questions were asked to the respondents to find out their information needs and seeking behavior. This section presents an analysis of the acquired responses.

Purpose of Seeking Information

Bronstein (2008) has explained that searching for information in order to satisfy an information need is a primary activity of everyday life. People seek information to broaden their understanding of the world around them and to pursue their professional and personal goals. Respondents were asked to mention their purpose of seeking information. Majority of them opined that they always seek information for case preparation (mean= 4.87), they frequently seek information for service and profession requirements (mean= 4.33). Most of the respondents showed that they sometimes seek information for improving their personal competencies, general knowledge or current awareness (mean= 3.06) for guiding and supporting the research work (mean= 2.63) for workshops and seminar presentations (mean= 2.73), to carry out administrative work (mean= 2.86), for leisure reading only (mean= 2.91), while few of the respondents mentioned that they seldom seek information for writing a book or article (mean= 1.61) (Table 5).

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics of Respondents' Opinion About Purposes of Seeking the Information

Sr.	Purposes	Mean	Median	Mode	St. Dev.
1.	Case preparation	4.87	5.00	5	.339
2.	For research work	2.63	4.00	3	.640
3.	Attending seminar/workshop presentation	2.73	3.00	3	.736
4.	For improving personal knowledge	3.06	3.00	3	.736
5.	Administrative activities	2.86	3.00	3	.872
6.	Professional Needs	4.33	4.00	3	4.171
7.	Leisure Needs For writing book/article	2.91	3.00	3	.763
8.	Case preparation	1.61	1.00	1	.891

Note: 5= Always, 4= Frequently, 3= Sometimes, 2= Seldom, 1= Never

Source of Acquiring Information Resources

According to the acquired results, respondents mentioned that they seldom get information from online databases (mean= 1.72), sometime from other libraries

(mean= 3.22). Majority of the respondents opined that they always acquire information from their district bar library (mean= 4.56). Most of the respondents opined that they frequently acquire information from senior lawyers (mean= 4.04), through purchase/personal collection (mean= 3.62), through decided cases from judicial record room (mean= 3.64).

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics of Respondents' Opinion About Sources of Acquiring Information Resources

Sr.	Sources of Acquiring Information Resources	Mean	Median	Mode	St. Dev.
1.	District Bar Library	4.56	5.00	5	.691
2.	Other Libraries	3.22	3.00	3	.798
3.	Senior lawyers	4.04	4.00	5	.876
4.	Purchase/personal collection	3.62	3.00	3	.830
5.	Decided cases from judicial record room	3.64	3.00	3	.901
6.	Online databases	1.72	1.00	1	.891

Note: 5= Always, 4= Frequently, 3= Sometimes, 2= Seldom, 1= Never.

Activities Performed in Case of Urgent Need of Information

Respondents were asked to mention the activities they usually perform whenever they have an urgent need of some information. Most of them mentioned that they search their personal collection (n= 51), use law digest (n= 54), use the library (n= 50), consult with senior lawyers (n= 44), PLJ (n= 48), PLD (n= 36), consult law dictionaries and encyclopedias etc. (n= 28), visit or phone any expert person (n= 27), use electronic resources (n= 2).

Table 7

Frequency Distribution of Respondents' Opinion About Activities Performed by them in case of an Urgent Need of Information

Sr.	Opinion	Frequency
1.	Personal collection	51
2.	Law Digest	54
3.	Use the library	50

4.	PLJ	48
5.	Visit or phone any expert person	27
6.	Consult with senior lawyers	44
7.	Consult Law Dictionaries/Encyclopedias etc.	28
8.	*PLD*	36
9.	Use electronic resources	2

Time spent per-week in information seeking activities

Most of the respondents mentioned that they spend 4-6 hours per week in reading law digest (mean= 1.75), scanning law journal/PLJ articles (mean=1.71) and internet searching (1.75). They mentioned that they spend more than 7-9 hours per week in reading judgments (mean= 1.44), and handling court cases/hearing (mean= 1.30).

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics of Responses About Time Spent Per-week in Different Information Seeking Activities

Sr.	Activities	Mean	Median	Mode	St. Dev.
1.	Reading Law Digest	1.75	2.00	2	.595
2.	Scanning law journal/PLJ	1.71	2.00	2	.637
3.	Reading Judgments	1.44	1.00	2	.617
4.	Handling court cases/hearing	1.30	1.00	1	.604
5.	Internet searching	1.75	2.00	1	.461

Note: 3=1-3 Hrs, 2=4-6 Hrs, 1= 7-9 Hrs

Preferred Language for Reading Material

Respondents were asked to mention their preferred language for reading material. They pointed out English as their most preferred language (mean= 3) (Table 9).

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics of Respondent's Opinions About Their Preferred Language

Opinion	Mean	Median	Mode	St. Dev.
Preferred language	3.00	3.00	3	.000

Note: 3= English, 2= Urdu, 1= Any other,

Preferred Format for Information

Descriptive statistics given in the Table 10 reveal that they most prefer print format (mean= 2.91), while they less prefer electronic (mean= 1.38), audio/visual (mean= 1.17), and microform formats (mean=1.16).

Table 10

Descriptive Statistics of Opinion About Preferred Format for Information

Sr.	Format	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Dev.
1	Electronic	1.38	1.00	1	.506
2	Print	2.91	3.00	3	.293
3	Audio / Visual	1.17	1.00	1	.514
4	Microform	1.16	1.00	1	.375

Note: 3=Most preferred, 2=Preferred 1= Less Preferred

Impact of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) on Information Needs and Seeking Behavior

ICT tools can be used to find, explore, analyze, exchange and present information responsibly and without discrimination. ICT can be employed to give users quick access to ideas and experiences from a wide range of people, communities and cultures (Wikipedia 2010). Respondents were asked to mention how ICT has affected their information seeking & gathering habits. The results show that most of them opined that to some extent ICT has changed their information seeking & gathering habits (n= 40), only three of the respondents accepted that ICT has changed their information seeking habits (n= 3), (Table 11).

Table 11

Frequency Distribution of Respondents' Opinion About Impact of ICT

Sr.	Opinion	Frequency	Percent
1.	ICT has changed information seeking & gathering habits	3	5.6
2.	Change to some extent	40	74.1

Use of Different Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) for Seeking Information

The increasing use of technology in all aspects of society makes confident, creative and productive use of ICT an essential skill for life. ICT capability encompasses not only the mastery of technical skills and techniques, but also the understanding to apply these skills purposefully, safely and responsibly in learning, everyday life and employment (Nikeditor 2009). Respondents were inquired to mention the type of Information and Communication Technologies used by them for seeking information. It was found that most of them were using telephone (n= 53) and atmospheric communication technologies/Radio/TV (n= 29). They were also using online PLD & PLJ (n= 15), internet search websites (n= 6), e-mail (n= 2), online chatting (n= 3) (Table 12).

Table 12

Frequency Distribution of Different Information & Communication Technologies Used by the Respondents

Sr.	Different ICTs	Frequency
1.	Telephone/Mobile	53
2.	Online PLD & PLJ	15
3.	Teleconferencing	1
4.	Email	2
5.	Online chatting	3
6.	Radio/TV	29
7.	Internet/Websites	6

Impact of ICTs on Information Seeking and Gathering Process

Information Communication Technology (ICT) is on the lips of every nation of earth because it brings innovation into information seeking and knowledge. ICT plays an immense role in information searching, generation, processing, storage/retrieval, dissemination and even entertainment (Objoha, 2005). Most of the respondents opined that ICT has made information seeking and gathering process easier for them (mean= 3.88) (Table 13).

Table 13

Descriptive Statistics of Respondent's Opinions About Impact of ICT on Information Gathering Process

Sr.	Opinion	Mean	Median	Mode	St. Dev.
1.	ICTs have made information seeking and gathering process easier or more difficult	3.88	4.00	4	.583

Note: 4= Easier, 3= More Difficult, 2= Much More Difficult, 1=About the Same.

Internet Usage

According to Kinshuk & Patel (1997)the Internet provides an infrastructure that supports unprecedented communication capabilities and collaboration opportunities. It offers a vast store of information that can be accessed in a structured manner. Use of internet was inquired from the respondents, it was discovered that only few of the respondents (n= 11) use internet while majority of the respondents do not use internet (n= 39).

Table 14

Frequency Distribution of Respondents' Internet Usage

Sr.	Internet Usage	Frequency	Percent
1.	Yes	11	20.4
2.	No	39	72.2
3.	Missing	4	7.4
	Total	54	100.0

Search Engines used for Information Seeking

Respondents were asked to mention the Internet search engines used by them. It was noted that three of them were using Google, four were using Yahoo and only two were using Yahoo & Google.

Table 15

Frequency Distribution of Search Engines Used by the Respondents

Sr.	Search Engines	Frequency
1.	Google	3
2.	Yahoo	4
3.	Google & Yahoo	2

Respondents' Opinion About their Information Seeking & Retrieval Skills

Respondents were inquired about their information seeking & retrieval skills while using Internet. They rated their information seeking & retrieval skill as poor (mean= 1.33) (Table 16)

Table 16

Descriptive Statistics of Respondents' Opinion About their Information Seeking/Retrieval Skills

Opinion	Mean	Median	Mode	St. Dev.
Information seeking /retrieval skills while using Internet	1.33	1.00	1	.680

Note: 5= Excellent, 4= Very good, 3= Good, 2= Fair, 1=Poor

Suggestions Provided by the Respondents

An open ended question was given to the respondents for inquiring their additional comments and suggestions. Only few of the respondents (n=11) provided additional comments or suggestions. They stressed that internet service should be provided to the lawyers (n=5), computer training should be provided to the lawyer community (n= 4), it was also demanded that decided cases/judgments should be on lined (n=1), hearing in courts should also be on lined (n= 1), they also stressed on the need of online law databases (n= 1) and more books in district bar library (n= 1).

Table 17

Frequency Distribution of Suggestions Provided by the Respondents

Sr.	Suggestions	Frequency
1.	All decided cases/judgments should be on lined	1
2.	Hearing in court should be on lined	1
3.	Internet services should be provided to the lawyers	5
4.	Online law databases should be provided	1
5.	More books should be given in District Bar Library	1
6.	Computer training should be provided to the lawyer community	4

Conclusions:

The results of this research showed the relevance with the findings of studies conducted earlier at international level. In Kenya Otike (2000) noted that lawyers needs information for fulfilling the legal information needs of their clients and seek assistance from the High Court library or collections in other law firms. Similarly this study reported that lawyers need information for case preparation and they mostly acquire information from their District Bar library. Wilkinson (2001) found that the lawyers overwhelmingly prefer informal sources when seeking information. According to the acquired results of this study most of the respondents showed that they acquire information senior lawyers (mean= 4.04), through purchase/personal collection (mean= 3.62), telephone and atmospheric communication technologies/Radio/TV. Kuhlthau & Tama (2001) in their study explored that lawyers prefer printed text. Present study also show the preferences of print format (mean= 2.91) and their preferred language is English. When they urgently need information they search out their personal collection, use law digest, PLD and PLJ. Lawyers spend more than 7-9 hours per week in reading judgments and handling court cases/hearing. Hinson et al (2007) in their research pointed out that seventy-eight percent of the lawyers were found agreed that internet improves their productivity. The results acquired from this research also show that most of the respondents opined that ICT has made information seeking and gathering process easier for them; however, only eleven of the respondents found to use internet and they rated their information retrieval skill as poor. The current research is helpful in understanding the information needs of the lawyers practicing in Sessions Court Bahawalpur. The study suggests that computer training and internet service should be provided to the lawyers for improving their computer skills.

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