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Awareness of E-resources among the College Students in Assam: A Study

Dr. Anupam Chanda
Bahona College, Jorhat, Assam, anupamchnd1988@gmail.com

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By

Dr. Anupam Chanda

Librarian, Bahona College
Jorhat, Assam- 785101
Email: anupamchnd1988@gmail.com
Mo: 7002039631
ORCiD: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8500-358X

Abstract

Overview: Electronic resources are becoming more and more imperative and valuable for the academic community. This is a matter of concern, as presently, electronic resources and the internet are considered extremely important tools for effective teaching and research. Many users need to know the complete potential of electronic resources. Nowadays college students are using more and more e-resources but all those e-resources are not authentic as most of them are directly access the e-resources by using the Google search engine.

Purpose: The purposes of the study are to explore the level of awareness of e-resources, their usage pattern, how frequently college students use the e-resources. The study also tried to reveal the perception of college students on the use of electronic resources, the challenges faced by them while using electronic resources, and their level of satisfaction with using the e-resources.

Methodology: The study adopted a descriptive survey design and a well-designed online questionnaire was used to collect data. The respondents were college students from various colleges in Assam. The questionnaire was administered among college students to collect the necessary primary data, keeping in view the objectives of the study.

Findings: The major findings of the study are 52.81% of the respondents are highly aware of the e-resources. E-books are the highly used e-resources. The smartphone is the most used device for accessing e-resources as replied by 87.29% of the respondents. 53.49% of the respondents stated that they are highly satisfied by using e-resources.

Keywords: *E-resources, Digital resources, College students, E-books, E-journals, Information communication technology.*

Introduction

Information communication technology has a change of propagation, and the movement of information is not limited to any kind of frontiers. The digitization of information in print media has carried a new perception overall in all the fields of human life and henceforth the formation and use of electronic resources are generally recognized as e-resources. Enormous scholarly literature is producing these days, out of which most of the literature is available online and reliance on e-resources is growing day by day. The understanding and use of electronic resources for quick expansion are essential. Thus, documents that seem in electronic layout and made accessible to users through any computer-based information retrieval system are classified as electronic resources. Evaluation of awareness and usage of electronic resources amongst the user community is continuously a challenging task. The printed resources are now being digitalized which has amplified the accessibility of books and journals in the electronic format. Providing access to electronic resources is a service to help students to find e-databases, e-journals, e-magazines-books/ e-audio/ e-images, data/ GIS, digital library projects, e -subject guide, e-newsletters, e-conferences proceedings, and web search tools on a range of topics. Libraries can have abundant information resources but if users are not using them, they are insignificant and a waste of resources. Electronic resources are becoming more and more imperative and valuable for the academic community. College academics are an exceptional population and rely on recent and timely information. In the digital generation, students are well experienced with the technological features of the 21st century, but the vast information on the web and dynamic nature of the technology throws new challenges in understanding the form of information and using it operatively.

Definition of E-resources

There is no regular and putative detailed explanation of the electronic resources. According to AACR2. An electronic resource is: "Material (data and/or program(s)) encoded for manipulation by a computerized device. This material may require the use of a peripheral directly connected to a computerized device (e.g., CD -ROM drive) or a connection to a computer network (e.g., the Internet)." This definition does not comprise electronic resources that do not require the use of a computer, for example, music compact discs and videodiscs. In a broad sense, electronic resources are those resources in electronic or e-format that can be retrieved via the internet in a digital library environment. Electronic resources are that electronic products that bring a collection of data, text, image collection, other multimedia products like numerical, graphical mode, commercially available for library and information

centers. These may be delivered on CD-ROM / DVD, over the internet, and so on. Electronic resources provide users faster, more convenience in 24*7 desktop access from home, college or library, etc. Usually, more than one person can use the same electronic resources concurrently.

Advantages of E-resources

The reasons most people nowadays using electronic resources are because of the ease of usability, readability, affordability, and accessibility. The following are the advantages of e-resources over the print media:

- **Multiple access:** A networked product can deliver multiple access at multiple points in time i.e. 24*7 and to multiple concurrent users.

- **Speed:** An electronic resource is a lot faster to browse or search, to extract information from, and assimilate that information into further material, and to cross-search or reference between different publications.

- **Functionality:** E-resource will allow the user to approach the publications to check its content in new ways by the click of the mouse on-screen mood.

- **Content:** the e-resources can contain a massive amount of information, but more significantly the material can consist of mixed media i.e. images, video, audio, and animation which could not be replaced in print.

- **Flexibility:** E-resources are much flexible than print resources. A user can read e-books, e-journals, etc. anywhere at any time just by using his/her electronics gadgets. E-resources can be accessed from the cloud server also by using the internet. E-resources can be shared easily and it is very much time-saving also.

- **International reach:** E-resources from other countries also can be accessed. Many open access e-resources can be accessed free of cost from anywhere and can be downloaded easily. There is no boundary or restriction for that in some cases.

- **Unlimited capabilities:** E-resources are available everywhere either on a subscription basis or in the form of open access e-resource. So there are unlimited capabilities of e-resources.

- **Reduced cost:** Institute can purchase e-resources either through a consortium or from any publisher with a low cost and can give access to multiple users at a time which reduces the overall cost of the e-resources.

- **Convenience:** It is very convenient to use e-resources. Anyone can use it at any time just by using the proper devices. Sharing of e-resources is also very easy.
- **Search-ability and linking:** Searchability and linking are very much easy for those who have the basic idea of how to use the computer/smartphone etc.

Disadvantages of E-resources

Now, more and more people prefer e-resources to traditional ones, because it can save them time and money. However, with various e-resources flooded in, more and more people are aware of the disadvantages of e-resources.

The fact that e-resources need superior devices or personal computers can be looked at as a disadvantage. Many e-resources are typically produced to be compatible with convinced software which in turn may be not easily available. E-resource reading devices are surely more expensive than printed books. A major concern of reading from an e-resource reader could hurt the eyes. Reading from a computer lacks the understanding and ease of reading from a book. Because of the rapid improvement of new computer systems, it is tough to judge whether the software or hardware will become outdated. Many titles that are available in traditional print books are not yet available in an electronic book format. Non-access to the e-resources after the subscription period expires or if the subscription is ceased then there is no point to have access to archives of the e-resources like e-journals, e-books. Therefore whether willingly or non-willingly the institute is forced to continue the subscription to have access for the previous issues.

Statement of the Problem

In this chaotic situation, most people rely on Google and several other channels like social media to access and share information. However, relying too much on these media may have some pros and cons as it is blindly forwarded to others without checking the information thoroughly and most time the authenticity of the information has been unchecked. The study titled "Awareness of E-resources among the College Students in Assam: A Study" has been undertaken to know the awareness of e-resources among the college students in Assam. Very few studies have been conducted on this particular topic, so the researcher has tried to know the level of awareness of e-resources among college students in Assam.

Objectives

The study was undertaken to find out the level of awareness of e-resources' perceived influence on studies among the college students in Assam. Specific objectives of the study are as follows:

- To explore the level of awareness of e-resources among the college students;
- To know the use of e-resources by the college students;
- To find out the frequency of use of electronic resources by the college students;
- To examine the perception of college students on the use of electronic resources in their studies;
- To identify the challenges of using electronic resources by the college students and;
- To know their level of satisfaction with using the e-resources.

Research Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey design and a well-designed online questionnaire was used to collect data. The respondents were college students from various colleges in Assam. The questionnaire was administered among college students to collect the necessary primary data, keeping in view the objectives of the study. Observations of the participants and interview of some of the participants for knowing the opinion of the respondents in respect of availability and awareness of e-resources is also carried out. The data collected through an online questionnaire has been analyzed by using MS Excel application software and graphical representation has been shown in the data analysis and interpretation section.

Scope and Coverage

There are many colleges located in Assam. The present investigation is limited to an exploratory study about the awareness of various kinds of e-resources among college students. It aims to fulfill the academic requirements of students which include mainly online databases, E-books, E-journals, and offline databases available on CD-ROMs/ DVDs, bibliographic databases of books, serials, Theses through in-house OPAC/ Web-OPAC The scope of the study is confined to the college students in Assam.

Review of Literature

Maitato and Botswana (2020) have conducted a study on the frequency and purpose of use of e-resources regarding level of awareness of students in Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel University of Agriculture and Technology. This study examined the incidence and purpose of the use of e-resources in Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel University of Agriculture and Technology. The study

correspondingly examined the demographic outline of students and their e-resources awareness. A descriptive survey design was used for this study. The purposeful sampling technique was adopted for this study. The sample consists of 120 respondents. Three research objectives were answered and one null hypothesis was tested at the significance level of 0.05. The study has exposed that the students use e-resources on daily basis with the internet topping at 98.4% followed by e-Books at 85.6%.

Sharma and Srivastava (2019) conducted a study on "awareness and usage of online information resources in engineering college affiliated to RGPV, Bhopal". The study aims at finding the awareness and usage of online information resources among faculty members, research scholars and post-graduate students in private engineering college libraries affiliated with RGPV Madhya Pradesh. This paper gives an overview of the awareness of online information esources among library users. An attempt was made to find out the status of e-resources in engineering college libraries. The analysis of the preliminary study reveals the purpose of using online resources and the extent of user's satisfaction towards online resources.

Soni, Gupta and Srivastava (2018) led a survey on awareness and usage of electronic resources among LIS scholars of Jiwaji University, Gwalior. The survey is an effort to determine and find the present status of awareness, accessibility, and use of electronic resources among library and information science research scholars of Jiwaji University Gwalior, like; CD-ROM databases, online databases, online journals, OPAC, etc. The study was done to find out the challenges, benefits, and progress gained by research scholars while accessing the e-resources. It is found out through a study that 'Shodhganga' was mostly used (95 percent) by research scholars, followed by DOAJ.

Jestin and Sornam (2016) in their study "E-resources in engineering college libraries in Kerala: awareness and availability" has mentioned that today the engineering institutions are investing a huge amount for digital resources because the quality of engineering institutions is determined in terms of digital collections, e-resources, networking component, ICT tools, etc. This study aimed at finding the awareness of librarians about the various e-resources existing in the engineering education sector and the availability of these e-resources in engineering college libraries in Kerala.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The analysis and interpretation of the data collected through online questionnaires distributed among the college students in Assam are provided below.

*Figure 1: Gender wise respondents (N=854)*
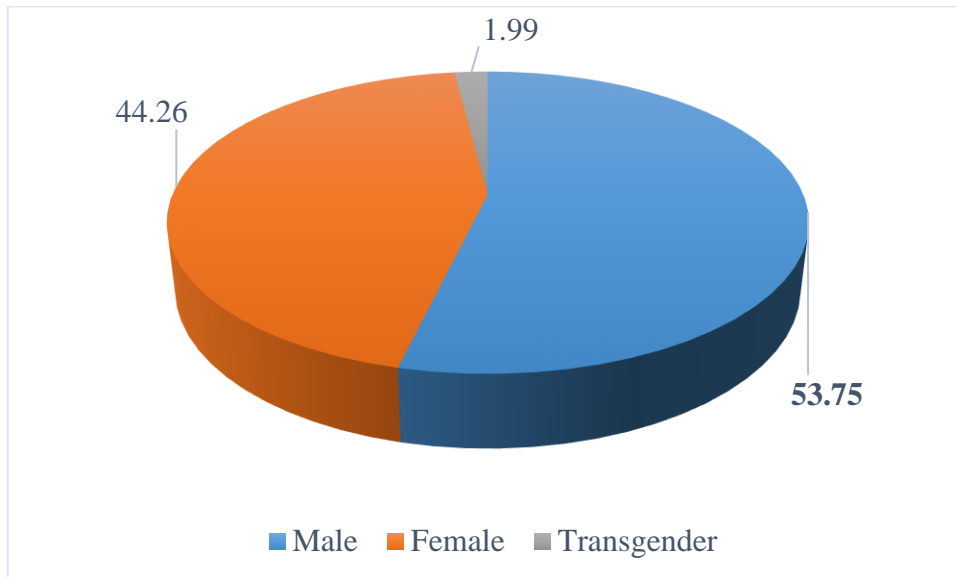
From the above figure, it is shown that 53.75% of the respondents belong to the male category and 44.26% of the respondents are from the female category, while only 1.99% of the respondents are from the transgender category.

Figure 2: Age-wise respondents (in years) (N=854)
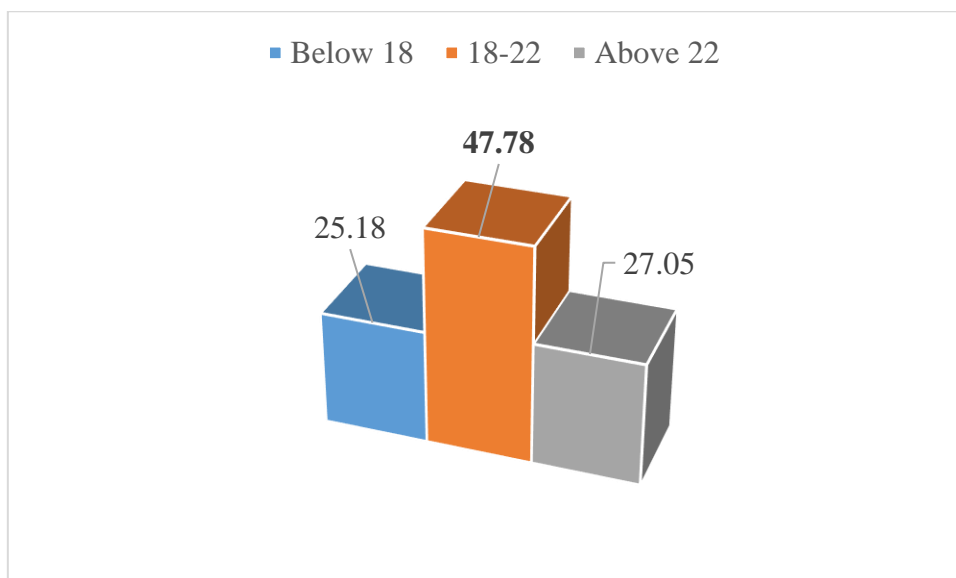
Most of the respondents i.e. 47.78% are from the age group 18-22 years followed by 27.05% of the respondents who are from the age group above 22 years. 25.18% of the respondents are from the age group of below 18 years

*Figure 3: Category wise respondents (N=854)*
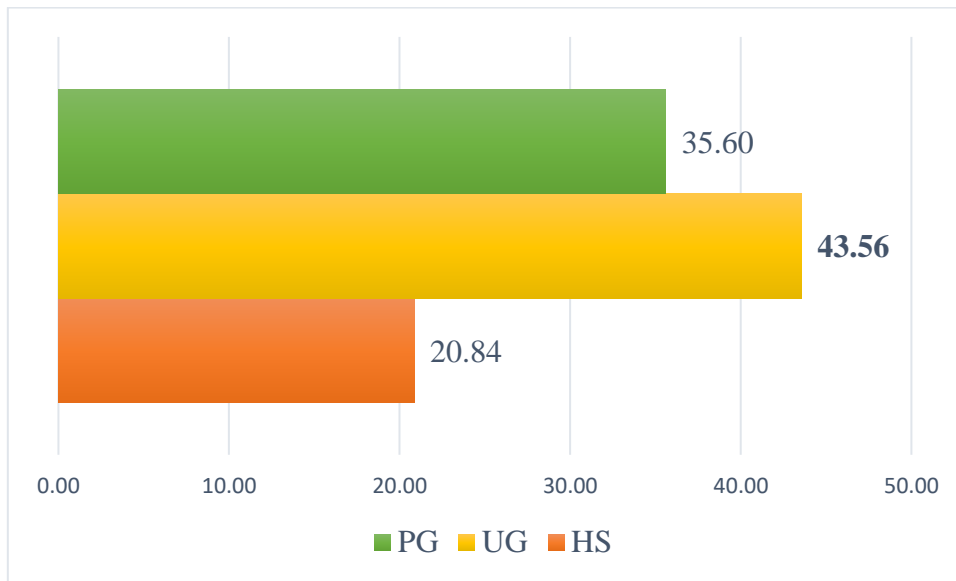
The above figure indicates that 43.56% of the respondents are from the UG level, 35.60% of the respondents are from PG level and 20.84% of the respondents are belong to HS class.

*Figure 4: Awareness level of e-resources (N=854)*
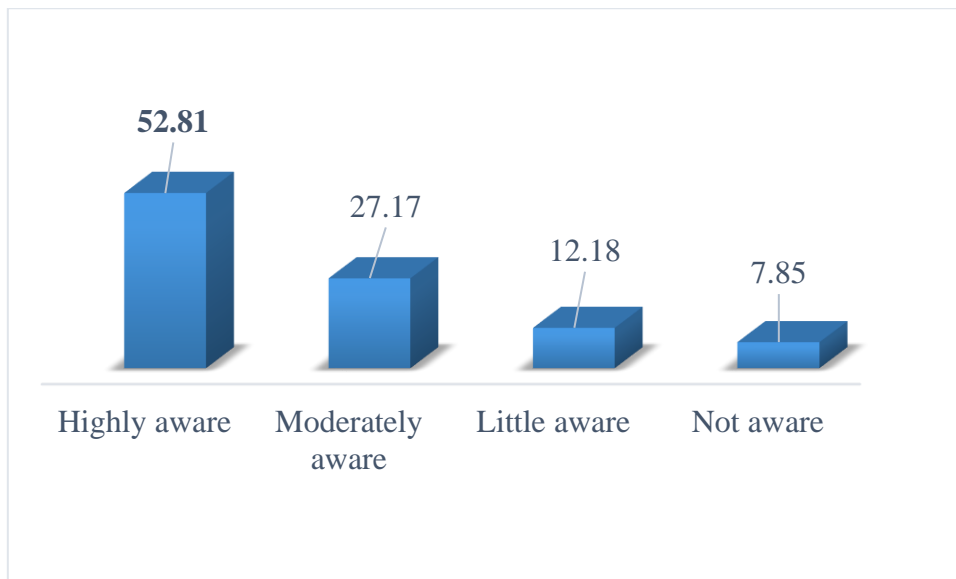
52.81% of the respondents replied that they are highly aware of the e-resources followed by 27.17% who replied that they are moderately aware of the e-resources, 12.18% of the respondents replied that they are little aware of the e-resources while surprisingly 7.85% of the respondents replied that they are not aware of the e-resources.

Figure 5: Source of information about e-resources (Multiple responses were allowed) (N=787)
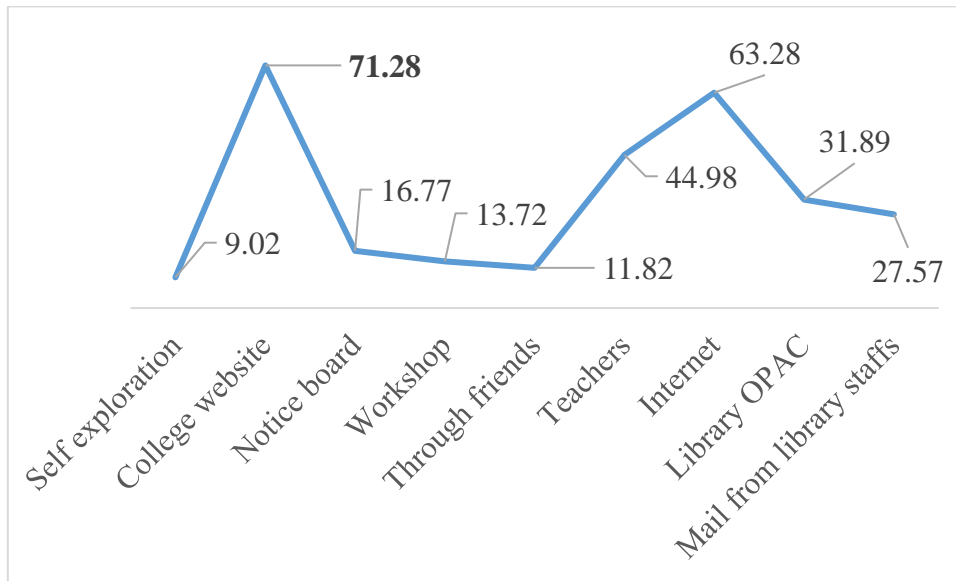

The majority of the respondents i.e. 71.28% replied that they came to know about the e-resources from the information available in the college website followed by 63.28% of the respondents who replied that they came to know about the e-resources from the internet. 44.98% of the respondents replied that they came to know about the e-resources from their teachers. Library OPAC and email from library staff are also the important sources from where they came to know about the e-resources, according to 31.89% and 27.57% respondents respectively.

*Figure 6: Category of e-resources used by the college students (N=787)*
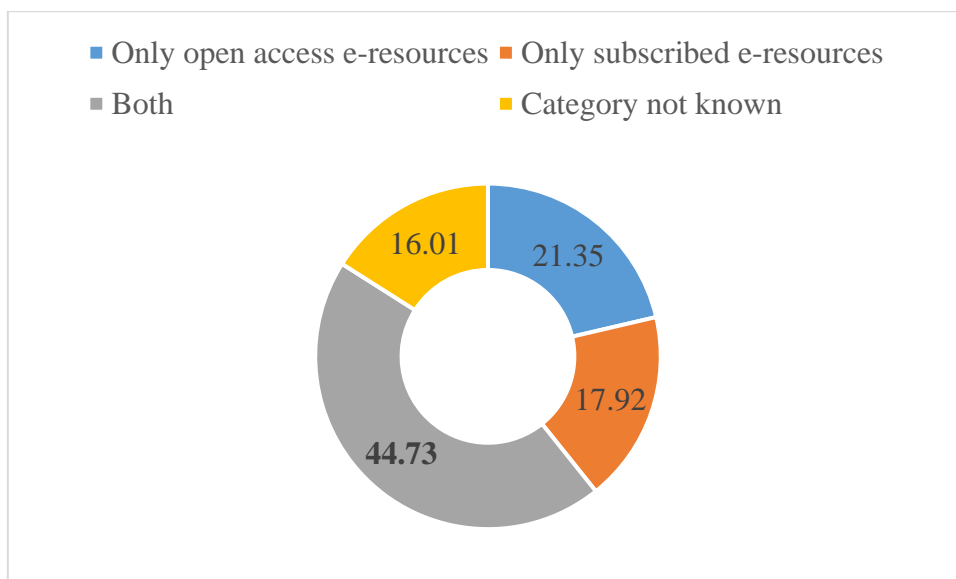
While asking about the category of e-resources use by the college students, 44.73% replied that they use both open access and subscribed e-resources. 21.35% replied that they use only open access e-resources followed by 17.92% who replied that they only use subscribed e-resources. But 16.01% of the respondents replied that they are not aware of the category.

Figure 7: Place of accessing e-resources (Multiple responses were allowed) (N=787)
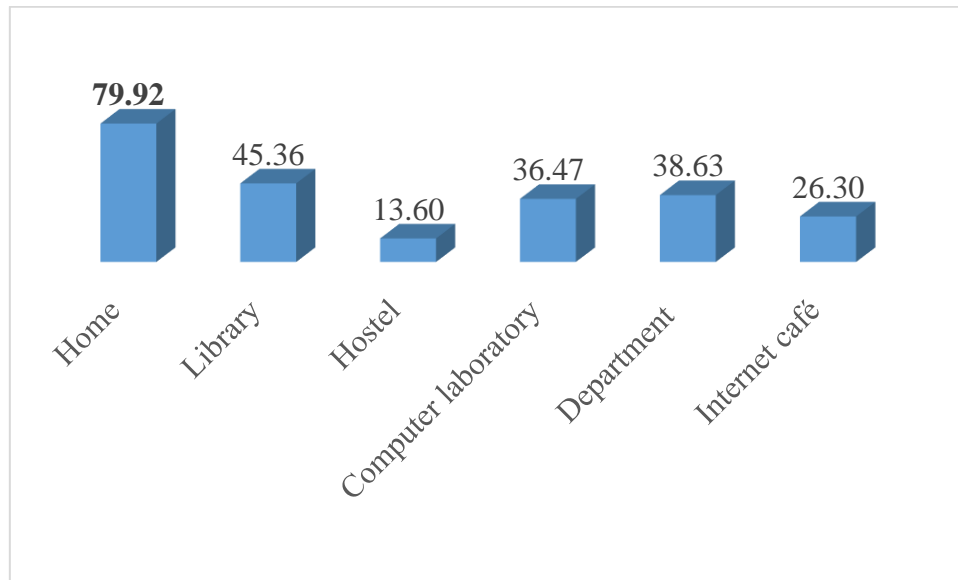

Respondents have stated the place where they are usually access e-resources. 79.92% of the respondents responded to accessing e-resources from their home, whereas 45.36% of the respondents did access in the library, 38.63% of respondents responded accessing e-resources in the department. 36.47% of the respondents replied that they access e-resources from the computer laboratory, while 26.30% replied that they access e-resources from internet café and a very few i.e. 13.60% replied that they access e-resources in the hostel.

Figure 8: Different types of e-resources used by the college students (Multiple responses were allowed) (N=787)
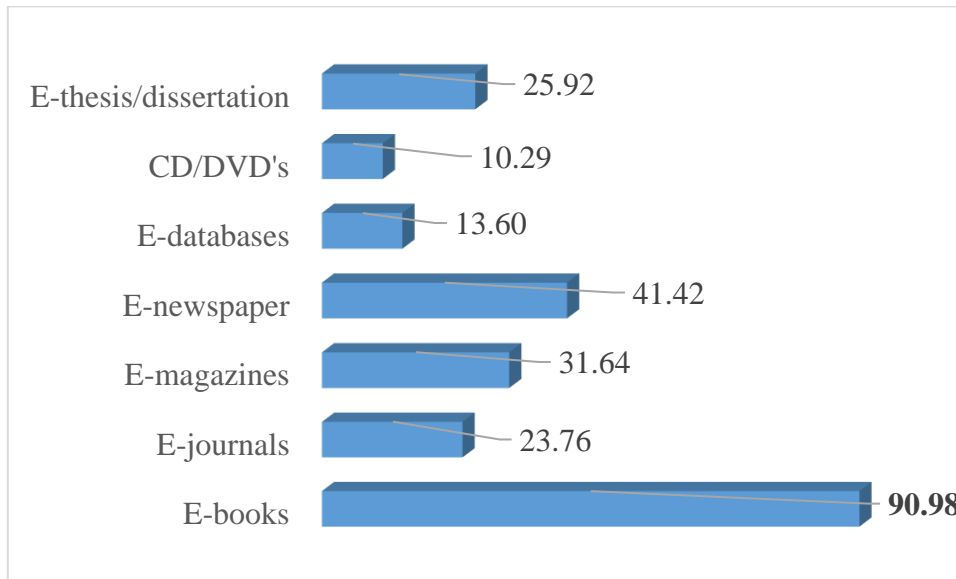
E-books are the highly used e-resources as stated by 90.98% of the respondents followed by e-newspaper replies by 41.42% of respondents. 31.64% of the respondents replied that they access e-magazines and 25.92% of the respondents replied that they access e-thesis/dissertation. Whereas 23.76% replied that they access e-journals. 13.60% and 10.29% of the respondents replied that they access e-database and CD/DVDs respectively.

Figure 9: Device for accessing e-resources (Multiple responses were allowed) (N=787)
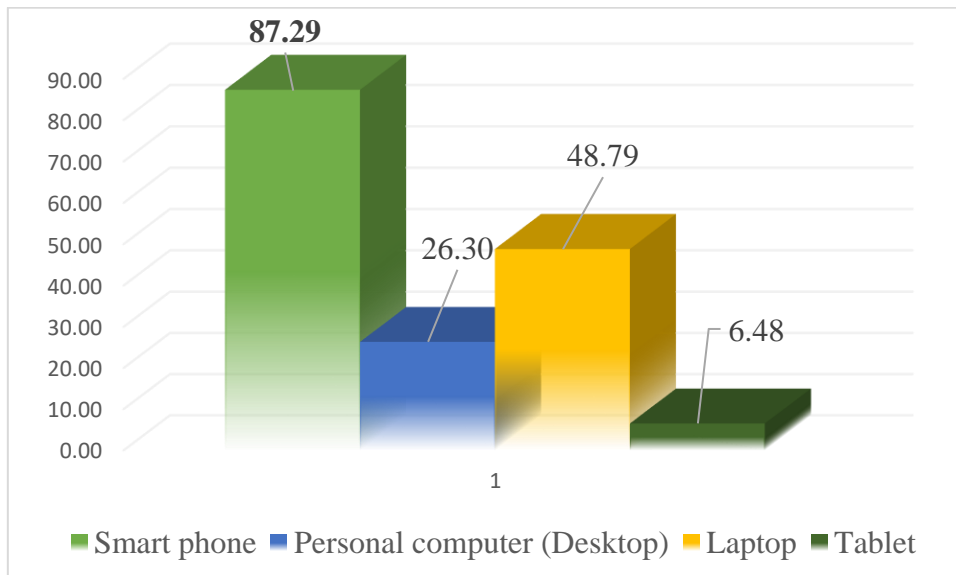
The above figure shows that the smartphone is the most used device for accessing e-resources as replied by 87.29% of the respondents, whereas 48.79% of the respondents replied that they use the laptop for accessing the e-resources. 26.30% of the respondents replied that they use

the desktop to access e-resources, a very few i.e. 6.48% of the respondents replied that they use a tablet device to access the e-resources.

Figure 10: Frequency of using e-resources (N=787)
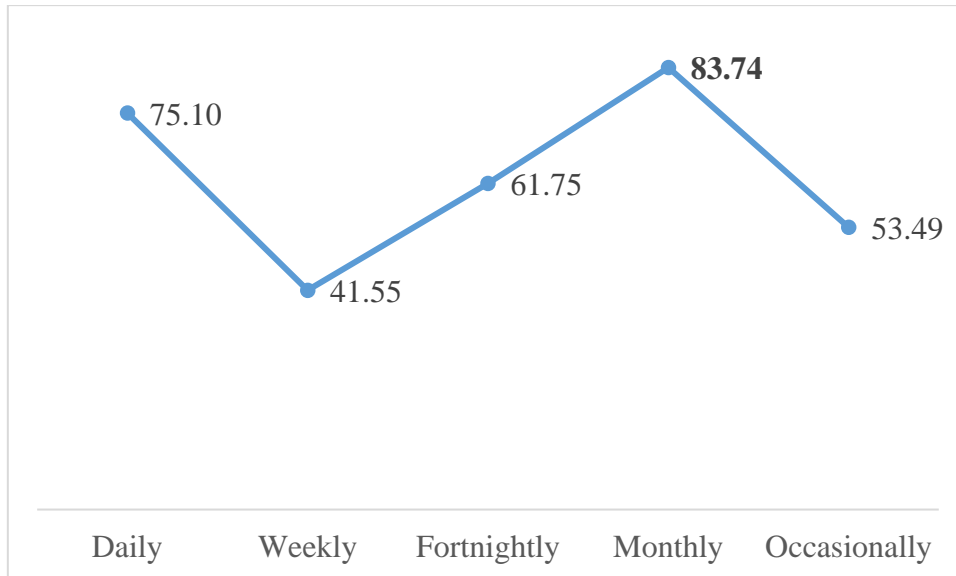
The above table explains that 83.74% of the respondents use e-resources monthly, followed by 75.10% daily, 61.75% frequently, 53.49% of the respondents use occasionally and 41.55% of the respondents replied that they use e-resources weekly.

Figure 11: Purpose of using the e-resources (Multiple responses were allowed) (N=787)
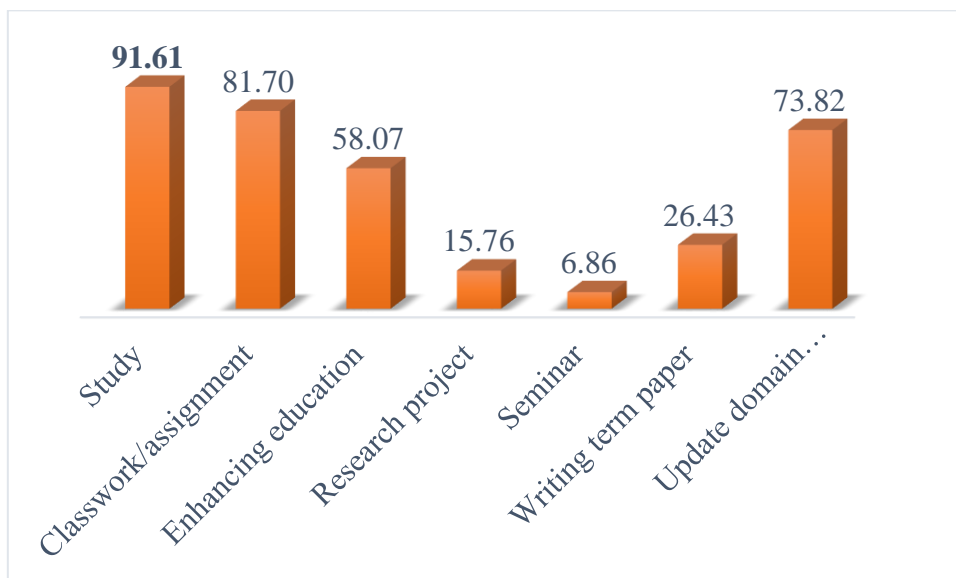
The above table revealed that 91.61% of respondents using e-resources for the study purpose, whereas 81.70% do classwork/assignments, 73.82% of respondents to update their domain, 58.07% replied that they use the e-resources to enhancing education, 26.43% replied that they

use e-resources for writing a term paper, 15.76% of respondents using e-resources for the research project and only 6.86% use e-resources for preparing seminar paper.

*Figure 12: Advantages of using e-resources (Multiple responses were allowed) (N=787)*
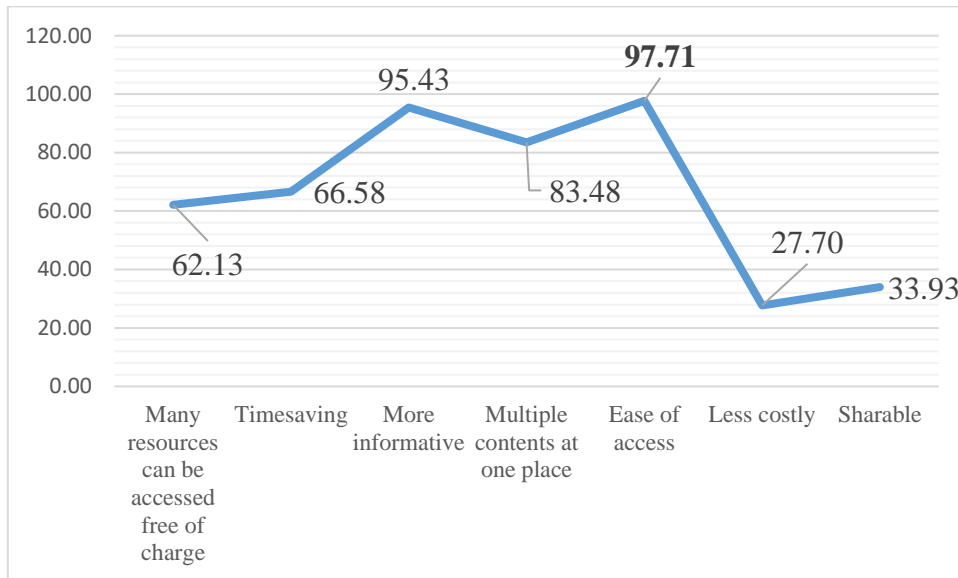
There are many advantages of using e-resources. 97.71% of the respondents replied that e-resources are ease of access followed by 95.43% who replied that e-resources are more informative, 83.48% replied that multiple contents can be accessed at one place, 62.13% replied that many e-resources can be accessed free of cost which is one most effective purpose to use e-resources. 33.93% replied that e-resources can be shared easily and 27.70% replied that e-resources are less costly.

Figure 13: Problem faced in accessing e-resources (Multiple responses were allowed) (N=787)
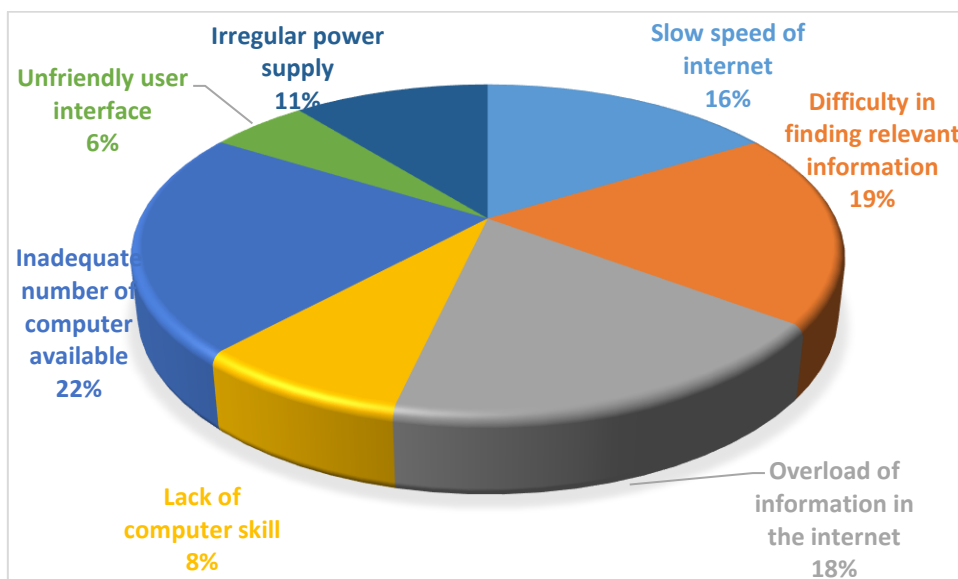
Although e-resources have many advantages, there are some difficulties also while using the e-resources. 22% of the respondents replied that due to the inadequate number of computers available in the colleges they are facing difficulties in accessing e-resources. 19% of the respondents replied that there are some difficulties in finding relevant information, 18% replied that overload of information is one of the problem in accessing the e-resources, 16% of the respondents replied that slow speed of the internet is the barrier of accessing the e-resources, 11% replied that irregular power supply is one of the issue to access e-resources, 8% replied that they have a lake of computer skill so they are facing problem to access the e-resources, a few i.e. 6% of the respondents replied that unfriendly user interface is the problem to access the e-resources.

Figure 14: Level of satisfaction in using e-resources (N=787)
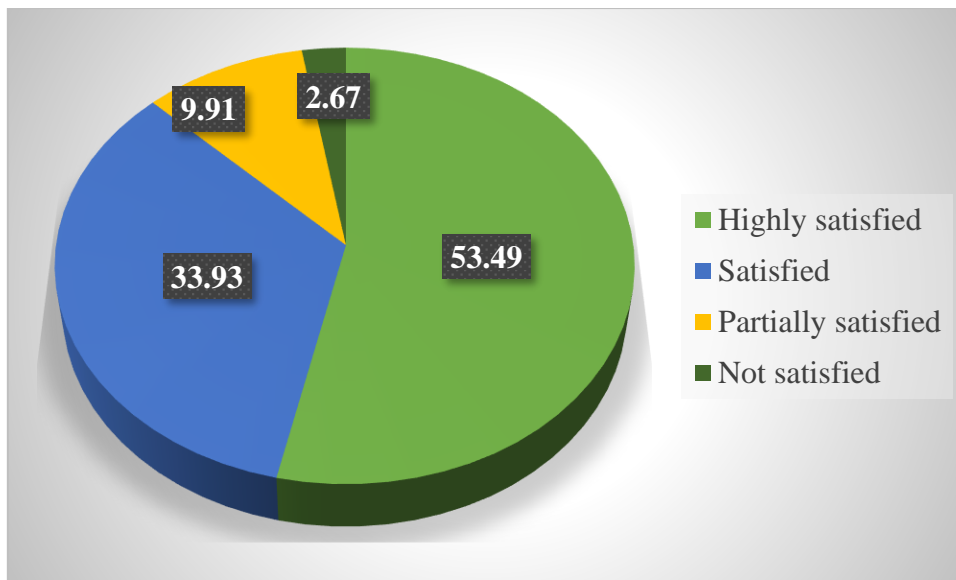
From the above table, it can be observed that the majority i.e. 53.49% of the respondents stated that they are highly satisfied by using e-resources, while 33.93% replied that they are satisfied, 9.91% replied that they are partially satisfied and only 2.67% of the respondents responded that they are not satisfied with e-resources.

Findings

The findings of the study show that out of total respondents 53.75% of the respondents are male. 47.78% of the respondents are from the age group 18-22 years. 43.56% of the respondents are from the UG level. 52.81% of the respondents are highly aware of the e-resources. 71.28% of the respondents came to know about e-resources from the information available college website. 44.73% of the respondents use both open access and subscribed e-resources. 79.92% of the respondent's access e-resources from their home. E-books are the

highly used e-resources as stated by 90.98% of the respondents. A smartphone is the most used device for accessing e-resources as replied by 87.29% of the respondents. 83.74% of the respondents replied that they use e-resources monthly. 91.61% of respondents using e-resources for their regular study. 97.71% of the respondents replied that e-resources are ease of access. 22% of the respondents replied that due to the inadequate number of computers available in the colleges they are facing difficulties in accessing e-resources. 53.49% of the respondents stated that they are highly satisfied by using e-resources.

Conclusion

The study explored the awareness of e-resources among college students in Assam. The study concludes that at present most college students are aware of e-resources and their usage pattern. Many students have a smartphone with them so it's become easy to access the e-resources at any time. Few problems are there as some of the e-resources are not available on the internet at free of cost, so it's difficult for the students to access these e-resources. Open access e-resources are sometimes not found authentic so it becomes a serious issue for college students to identify the correct information available on the internet. Concerning the purpose of use, it has been found out that students mostly use e-resources for their regular study. They used to access e-resources mostly from their home by using their smartphone. Due to an inadequate number of computers available in the colleges its become difficult for them to have to access the e-resources by using the college laboratory. The most used e-resource are e-books because there are so many open access e-books websites and from these websites, students can easily download e-books. Most of the college students are satisfied by using e-resources. College should develop a high standards computer laboratory and need to subscribe to e-resources so that students can easily access these e-resources freely. Orientation or awareness programs about the access and use of e-resources should be conducted regularly so that students have more and more interest in the usage of e-resources.

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