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## A Quantitative Study on Information-Seeking Behaviour about Wellness and Nutrition in the Digital Age

Preeti Sharda

*Librarian, Post Graduate Government College for Girls – 42 (PGGCG-42), Chnadigarh,*  
sharda.preeti@gmail.com

Kalyani Singh

*Assistant Professor, Department of Home Science (Foods and Nutrition) Post Graduate College for Girls,*  
Sector 42, Chandigarh, India, kalyanisinghhsc@gcg42.ac.in

Sabah Singh

*Consultant Psychologist, Crayons Clinic, Chandigarh, sabahsingh1306@gmail.com*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Information refers to structured or processed data and people need it in all walks of life. Information seeking is the process or activity or conscious effort to answer a specific query. Johnson (1997) defined information seeking as “purposive acquisition of information from selected information carriers”. Thomas D. Wilson coined the term “Information Seeking Behavior” in 1981. According to Krikelas (1983) “Information Seeking Behaviour refers to any activity of an individual that is undertaken to identify a message that satisfies a perceived need”. Wilson (2000) has defined, Information Seeking Behavior as the purposive seeking of Information as a consequence of a need to satisfy some goal. The term Information seeking behavior involves a set of actions like information needs, seeking information, evaluating and selecting information, and finally using this information (Sultana, 2016). The information is obtained from different media and resources and is thereafter used. It is a high-level cognitive process that is part of learning or problem-solving.

Wellness and information-seeking behavior involves the methods by which individuals consciously search diverse resources for information regarding their wellness and nutrition. According to the National Wellness Institute, wellness is, “an active process through which people become aware of and make choices towards a more successful existence” (Hettler, 1980). It is a conscious, self-directed, and evolving process of achieving full potential. It is multidimensional and holistic, encompassing lifestyle, mental and spiritual well-being, and the environment (Stoewen, 2015).

People seek information on nutrition as it is directly related to one's overall wellbeing pivotally. What we put into our bodies has a direct effect on the maintenance of our wellness (Ohuruogu, Chinyere & BO, 2019). Nutrition is also important for maintaining excellent health. Adequate nutrition is essential to our overall wellness. Nutrition plays a major role in the human life cycle

from birth to death beginning with fertilization through the stages of growth, development, and aging. Taking a balanced diet is one of the most successful and cost-efficient approaches to reduce the burden of numerous diseases and their related risk factors including obesity (Ohlhorst, et al, 2013). Nutrient deficiency, excess, or imbalance may lead to chronic diseases.

Adequate knowledge about nutrition is directly related to the wellness of an individual. Having awareness about practices and concepts related to nutrition helps in having adequate food intake and being medically fit. Many people search for information on the Internet about wellness and nutrition in their everyday lives. There is a plethora of information available on the Internet about wellness and nutrition wellbeing. Some people also search for information on wellness and nutrition from the library, especially working professionals and students. During the emergent COVID-19 pandemic, this search got amplified because people were quarantined, isolated, wanted to grasp more knowledge about nutrition's role in immunity, and face-to-face visits to the hospitals and dispensary were cut to curve the spread of COVID-19.

Accessing the pattern of searching of information on the Internet about wellness and nutrition is a very important area of research and many pieces of research have been undertaken to access the level of digital literacy among people. Among the initial studies Pollard, et al (2015) conducted a study to measure the change in use of the Internet for searching nutrition information and found that access to the Internet for nutrition information increased from <1% in 1995-2001 to 9.1% in 2004 and 33.7% in 2012. Quaidoo, Ohemeng and Amankwah-Poku (2018) conducted a study to ascertain the sources of nutrition information and level of nutrition knowledge among young adults in the Accra metropolis. The authors concluded that respondents preferred online resources to seek information related to nutrition. The authors also found that participants considered healthcare professionals as the most reliable source of nutrition information. Katole (2020) conducted a study to assess the preference between

allopathic and ayurvedic therapy in India. The survey through a structured was conducted among 1018 consumers to see which type of therapy was preferred by patients. The results showed that 72.88% of the respondents were inclined to allopathic therapy. The tilt towards allopathy was seen due to a hectic lifestyle and easy accessibility. The level of education however was seen to be directly proportional to the preference of ayurvedic treatment.

Jalali, Keshvari and Soleymani (2020) surveyed 18 female students of the Isfahan University of Medical Sciences to know about their fitness information-seeking behavior. According to the authors, most of the respondents considered the Internet as the most accessible and affordable resource for obtaining the newest information in any field. Researchers also found that participants recognized social media as the best means for receiving various pieces of training and updating their information on different aspects of health issues including weight loss diets and exercises for gaining fitness. Pattath (2021) surveyed the online health information-seeking behaviour of information technology (IT) professionals of a state organization on the East Coast of the United States of America. The author concluded that participants preferred the Internet to search for information about wellness and prevention to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

As mentioned above, in today's era, it is pertinent to access information through Internet facilities. Overall wellness through appropriate nourishment is desired by one and all. In today's world of science and technology, it is a common behaviour of those who have the resources to surf the Internet to seek this information on the Internet. Information related to nutrition for wellness is also available in libraries. But, with the Internet era, are libraries accessed? The information available on the Internet is seamless, but its usefulness to the people is a question mark. Further, there is a paucity of data on the use of e-resources subscribed by the libraries among students and professionals. Keeping this rationale in mind, the current study entitled,

‘A Quantitative Study on Information-Seeking Behaviour about Wellness and Nutrition in the Digital Age’, has been carried out among respondents with the following objectives:

1. To assess and compare the use of the Internet to search for information on wellness and nutrition among students and professionals.
2. To ascertain and compare the use of libraries to search for information on wellness and nutrition among students and professionals.
3. To see the preference of respondents (students and professionals) about allopathic medicine over home remedies of nutrition.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Study Design**

The current study was conducted on students and professionals residing in the Chandigarh Tricity, that is Chandigarh- the City Beautiful and capital of Punjab and Haryana, Panchkula and Mohali- the satellite cities of Chandigarh as well as districts of Haryana and Punjab respectively.

**Sample size:** A total of 275 respondents which comprised 155 students and 120 professionals were assessed.

**Sampling technique.** The sample was collected through online survey mode using Google Forms.

### **Selection of Sample**

#### **Inclusion criteria**

1. Students of Chandigarh Tricity

2. Professionals of Chandigarh Tricity

#### Exclusion criteria

1. Students from Institutes outside Chandigarh Tricity
2. Professionals from Institutes outside Chandigarh Tricity

#### **Tools for Data Collection**

Self-designed questionnaire to assess information related to demography, Internet usage, and wellness was used as tool of data collection. The questionnaire was a five-point response with 5 items related to Internet usage and wellness. The questions are kept simple, quick to answer, and less cumbersome. The questions in the Google form were kept compulsory to answer to avoid any type of bias.

**Demographic information:** Respondent's name, age, and the designation was obtained under this head. The questionnaire was filled in by students pursuing their graduation and post-graduation as well as professionals which included teaching as well as non-teaching staff.

**Information regarding Internet usage and wellness and nutrition:** The respondents were asked questions on a five-point scale (1 point referring to strongly disagree to 5 points meaning strongly agree). They were asked if they used the Internet to seek information about wellness and nutrition, if they were satisfied with the digital information available on wellness and whether they followed tips about wellness on the Internet. The respondents were also asked if they enjoyed visiting the library to search for the requisite information. Their preference between allopathic medicine and home remedies was also enquired through in the current research.

## Statistical Analysis

The data was obtained through the Google forms was recorded and tabulated. SPSS, that is Statistical Package for Social Sciences was used to run the analysis on the current study. Keeping forth the objectives, statistical tests such as frequency, mean and standard deviation, t-test, and Pearson's correlation were carried out for analysis.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1- Distribution of the Participants on the Basis of Designation**

<b>Designation</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Student</b>	155	56.4%
<b>Professional</b>	120	43.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>100%</b>

The current research was constituted of 56.4% students and 43.6% professionals (Table 1).

**Table 2: Information-Seeking Behaviour of the Respondents about Wellness and Nutrition**

<b>S. No.</b>	<b>Information-Seeking Behaviour of the Respondents</b>	<b>MEAN ± STD DEV</b>
<b>1</b>	Do you use the Internet to search for information on wellness and nutrition?	<b>4.004 ± 1.00</b>
<b>2</b>	Are you satisfied with the available digital information on wellness?	<b>3.956 ± 0.97</b>

<b>3</b>	Do you follow the tips provided within the searched digital information?	<b>3.735 ± 1.06</b>
<b>4</b>	Do you visit the library to search the information?	<b>3.113 ± 1.34</b>

The respondents (students and professionals) were asked questions related to use of E-resources for information about wellness and nutrition (Table 2). The questions were asked on a Likert scale of five points ranging from 1- strongly disagree to 5- strongly agree. The respondents agreed ( $4.004 \pm 1.00$ ) when asked if they used the Internet to search for information on wellness and nutrition. They also agreed ( $3.956 \pm 0.97$ ) when they were asked if they are satisfied with the digital information available on wellness. When inquired if they do follow the tips provided on wellness on the Internet, the response by them ranged from neutral to agreeing ( $3.735 \pm 1.06$ ) on it. The respondents majorly gave a neutral response ( $3.113 \pm 1.34$ ) to whether they visited the library to search for such information. Thus, it can be inferred that the respondents primarily search for information on a digital basis rather than going to the library. They may find access to the information in the library cumbersome or rather looking for the information on the Internet an easy and less tiring method.

**Table 3: Comparison of the Respondents Based on Preference of Medication**

<b>Preference of Medication of the Respondents</b>	<b>MEAN ± STD DEV</b>
Do you take allopathic medicine over home remedies of nutrition?	3.102 ± 1.31

It was seen that the respondents, both students as well as professionals gave a neutral response ( $3.102 \pm 1.31$ ) when asked whether they would take allopathic treatment over home remedies (Table 3). In the study done by Katole (2020), the use of allopathy was seen to be higher as

they are cheap and have easy access. However, the educated respondents were not very inclined to the use of allopathy. The neutral response in the current study thus shows that the respondents are maybe tilting towards using home remedies for the treatment of ailments as well. This may help in going back to the traditional ways of curing conditions and reducing the intake of medication.

**Table 4: Comparison among Respondents Based on use of E-Resources on Wellness and Nutrition**

<b>Group Statistics</b>					
<b>S. No.</b>	<b>Use of E-Resources on Wellness and Nutrition</b>	<b>Designation</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>MEAN ± STD DEV</b>	<b>T- test</b>
<b>1</b>	Do you use the Internet to search information on wellness and nutrition?	Student	155	4.052± 1.06	<b>.899</b>
		Professional	120	3.942± 0.93	
<b>2</b>	Are you satisfied with the available digital information on wellness?	Student	155	4.213± 0.97	<b>5.18**</b>
		Professional	120	3.625± 0.89	
<b>3</b>	Do you follow the tips provided within the searched digital information?	Student	155	4.032± 1.10	<b>5.56**</b>
		Professional	120	3.350± 0.87	

<b>4</b>	Do you visit the library to search the information?	Student	155	3.510± 1.32	<b>5.89**</b>
		Professional	120	2.600± 1.19	

\*\* p<0.01 (highly significant)

The table 4 shows the comparison of the response among students and professionals concerning E-resources. It was seen that both the students (4.052± 1.06) and professionals (3.942± 0.93) respondents equally agreed in terms of the use of the Internet to search for information. Concerning the level of satisfaction with the use of the Internet for digital information, students (4.213± 0.97) had a higher score than professionals (3.625± 0.89). The results were statistically highly significant (p<0.01). On being asked whether they followed tips provided when searching for digital information, the students agreed (4.032± 1.10) to it whereas the professionals gave a neutral response (3.350± 0.87). The difference was seen to be statistically highly significant (p<0.01). When inquired about the use of the library to search information, the student's response ranged from neutral to agreeing (3.510± 1.32) unlike the professionals whose responses oscillated between disagreeing to neutral (2.600± 1.19). The difference was observed to be statistically highly significant (p<0.01). It can be inferred from the results that the students are technically more sound than professionals. Further, the students utilize E-resources and the library for seeking information more than professionals.

**Table 5: Comparison Among Respondents Based on Preference of Medication**

<b>Group Statistics</b>				
<b>Preference of Medication</b>	<b>Designation</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>MEAN ± STD DEV</b>	<b>T-test</b>
<b>Do you take allopathic</b>	Student	155	3.329± 1.39	<b>3.32**</b>

<b>medicine over home remedies of nutrition?</b>	Professional	120	2.808± 1.13	
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\*\* p<0.01 (highly significant)

As depicted in Table 5 students gave a neutral response towards agreeing (3.329± 1.39) when asked their preference of allopathic medication over home remedies, whereas the professionals showed a mean below neutral (2.808± 1.13). The difference was observed to be statistically highly significant (p<0.01). The result aligned with the study conducted by Katole (2020) wherein it was seen that respondents with higher education were not in favour of allopathic treatments. In the current study, the students have shown an inclination towards allopathy, unlike professionals.

**TABLE 6: Correlation Between E-Resources and Preference of Medication**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Do you take allopathic medicine over home remedies of nutrition?</b>
<b>E resources</b>	.400**

\*\*p<0.01(highly significant)

There is a significant difference between students and professionals concerning the preference of medicine and the use of E-resources (Table 6).

## **CONCLUSION**

The current study encompassed information about the use of E-resources for seeking information on wellness and nutrition among students and professionals. A comparison was also run among the two designations to seek some results. It was seen that the respondents,

both students, and professionals searched for information on a digital basis rather than going to the library. The reason for this may be that they find access to information through the Internet easy, cheap, and less cumbersome. The respondents, overall gave a neutral response ( $3.102 \pm 1.31$ ) when asked whether they would take allopathic treatment over home remedies.

Further, on comparing responses of students and professionals, it was seen from the results that the students were technically more sound than professionals. Further, the students utilized E-resources and the library for seeking information more than professionals. The students have shown an inclination towards allopathy, unlike professionals. The professionals are more in favour of home remedies rather than consuming allopathic drugs. A significant correlation was seen between students and professionals for preference of medication- allopathy or home remedies and use of E-resources. It can be concluded that these resources must be utilized as much as possible Libraries have been a storehouse of knowledge since time immemorial. They may provide information that is unique and hard to find. Nutrition and wellness go hand in hand. They are an important part of our sustenance. It is vital to get correct and authentic information about it for a good quality of life. The choice between allopathy and home remedies must be made prudently so that there is minimum damage to our organs. Thus, correct and reliable information is a vital component of knowledge. Students and professionals both must tap this knowledge from both sources- digital as well as libraries.

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