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Analysis of Gender Differences in Information Retrieval Skills in the Use of Electronic Resources among Post Graduate Students of Alagappa University, Tamil Nadu

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ABSTRACT

This paper is to know how the post graduate students of Alagappa University, applied their Information Retrieval skills in accessing electronic resources. The samples are collected from the 252 of four faculties' postgraduate students of Alagappa University. With the help of filled questionnaire, the collected data was further analysed by using simple percentage, standard deviations and Chi-Square test. This study mainly focused on information retrieving skill among graduate students of Alagappa University. Female respondents are more compare than male students. It aspires to measure the postgraduate graduates' use and access of searching the information using web tools, techniques and resources. This study finds that female respondents are high information retrieval skills compared to male. This study also emphasis most of the respondents Searching the electronic catalogue (OPAC) through the author, title and shelf searches." has highest mean score as far as both male and female respondents 4.54 (S.D. 0.789) and male respondents 4.35 (0.957) are concerned.

Keywords: Information Literacy Skills, Information Retrieval Skills, Electronic Resources

1. INTRODUCTION

Information and communication technology is pervasive in every area of human activities. It has become a potent force in the transformation of social, economic, and political life, globally. It affects the way we think, live, communicate and share information. Information professionals in academic libraries are regarded as the gatekeepers of knowledge. In most cases, they are expected to impart information literacy skills to library users' community especially the faculty members who basically are researchers. Information retrieval skills are crucial for retrieving information in this era of technology that most of the information needed for research can be retrieved from electronic sources.

However, students' efforts to complement their work with electronic resources may be limited due to lack of skills. Therefore knowledge of skills is necessary to selectively retrieve accurate, relevant and up-to-date information stored in documents instead of all the information that may not be relevant for their school work. Skills acquisition is in fact, very crucial to the use of electronic resources because information in electronic forms can only be used if students possess the skill to retrieve the exact information needed for learning and research.

Traditionally this would have focused on a student's ability to locate books and journals in the library. However, the services offered by libraries have expanded dramatically and published information now comes in many different formats. Being able to find relevant and appropriate information is a skill required as a preliminary to all decision making whether in academic work, career management or the home.

Effective information retrieval skills can be demonstrated by:

- The ability to evaluate various bibliographic search strategies
- The ability to select and justify the appropriate search techniques in order to carry out independent research, and
- The ability to critically evaluate search results.

The present study is to analyse the Gender Differences in Information Retrieval Skills and Use of Electronic Resources among Postgraduate Students of Alagappa University. The study is focused on the general information retrieval skills towards electronic information resources among the students of Alagappa University.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kumar¹ conducted a study which revealed that most of the postgraduates (95.5 per cent) belonging to rural areas were computer literate. Further, most of them had accessed the web for communication purposes and for locating general and academic information. Users at the postgraduate level does not significantly affect the use of computer and internet, information searching behaviour patterns on the web and library systems, especially OPAC. Tsai, Liang, Hou & Tsai² suggested that educators need to pay more attention in helping students to develop online search strategies for academic activities. In addition, only female students' metacognitive strategies were significantly different from search contexts. There may be an effect of the interaction between search context and gender on students' online searching strategies.

Hossain and Shariful³ concluded that essential training in the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) can be arranged in schools and colleges as well as in public libraries, especially for the women of rural area so that they can get access to quick and accurate information regarding every aspect of their daily lives. Jato and Oresiri⁴ recommended that students should be enlightened on the importance of online resource for their academic success to propel them to use search engines often; and to use a lot of search engines available on the net to retrieve vital information. Nachiappan and Jeyshankar⁵ studied how the graduate students and Scholars of AIMs applied their Information Retrieval (IR) skills in accessing electronic resources. The research method was descriptive survey method was adopted in this study. The data were collected from the 79.35% of entire graduate students and research scholars in Alagappa Institute of Management through a well-structured questionnaire. Almost 90% of the students came from the rural areas where the university was established to increasing the literacy level of rural based students.

Grace and Jeyshankar⁶ examined the information seeking behavior of the nursing professionals of Apollo College of Nursing, Chennai. Questionnaire (N =175) was used to collect the data and the analysis covers mainly the type of sources used, usage pattern, services utilized by the users, information seeking behaviour, level of satisfaction and constraints faced by the nursing professionals. Concludes that the library sources and services were utilized at the maximum level by the undergraduates and users who had lecturing and research as their nature of work.

Jeysankar, Nachiappan, and Suresh⁷ analysed Social Networking Sites (SNSs) are very useful to connect the people in today's society. The purpose of this study was to investigate the access to and use of social networking sites among the post graduate students of rural colleges in India. The respondents have excellent skills in using social networking sites for sharing and communicating information. Ravichandran and Jeysankar⁸ investigated the information search pattern in the internet and made comparison among the respondents in respect of search engines and information resources. The study was conducted among female respondents who are pursuing their education at undergraduate and postgraduate level at various women colleges affiliated to Madurai Kamaraj University. It is found that majority of the respondents are used internet to search information for their examinations. The majority of respondents are used "Google" search engine to locate information in the internet. The study is also recommended that the teachers and librarians should organize the information literacy programme regularly to increase use of the electronic resources especially scholarly content.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are:

- ❖ To know the purpose of visiting the library;
- ❖ To know the access points for accessing electronic information resources;
- ❖ To know the awareness and use of electronic resources;
- ❖ To find the information retrieval skills of the postgraduate students of Alagappa University and
- ❖ To know the Frequency of using electronic resources.

4. HYPOTHESES BASED ON OBJECTIVES

- ❖ There is no significant difference between the male and female respondents and their responses towards the purpose of visiting the library.
- ❖ There is no significant difference between the male and female respondents and their responses towards e-Resource access points.
- ❖ There is no significant difference between the male and female respondents of information retrieval skills and
- ❖ There is no significant difference between the male and female respondents and their purposes of using Electronic Resources.

5. METHODOLOGY

The Alagappa University, Karaikudi have been selected for population area. The total population comprises of 252 respondents in Post Graduate students have been taken for the study. The Alagappa University itself include four faculties like Arts, Science, Education and Management. The random sampling method was selected and adopted well for this study. The well-structured questionnaire distributed for collecting the data and filtered 252 duly filled questionnaires were collected with the response rate of 79.35%.

6. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

There are several departments classified under four faculties was created by the university. Random Sampling Techniques were used well in the study. This study was based on the data collected from the University that are working under the jurisdictions of the four faculties that are Arts, Education, Management and Science. The questionnaire method was adopted for collecting the data. The data collected using the tools selected for the study was analysed using SPSS. The tables and diagrams with percentile and Chi-square test were employed when required for analysis and interpretations of data.

Table 1: Faculty-wise Distribution of respondents

Sl. no	Faculty	Frequency	%
1.	Arts	63	25.00
2.	Science	63	25.00
3.	Management	63	25.00
4.	Education	63	25.00
Total		252	100.00

The data was collected during the academic year 2017-2018. For the purpose of getting required information, final year PG students are selected because they acquired more skills for using electronic information than that of the first year students. The researcher distributed 100 questionnaires each faculty of the university. We have used 63 dully filled questionnaires each faculty. Because faculty of arts dully filled 63 questionnaires, 47 questionnaires are not properly answered. So the study equally selected 63 questionnaires from remaining three faculties.

Table 2: Gender-wise Distribution of Respondents

S.No	Gender	Frequency	%
1	Male	82	32.54
2	Female	170	67.46
Total		252	100.00

Among them 170 were Female and 82 were Male. The percentage of respondents in the table 2 clearly indicates that the female responded well as compared to male.

Table 3: Frequency of Library Visits

S.No	Library Visit	Frequency	%
1	Daily	125	49.60
2	Once a Week	78	30.95
3	Once a month	27	10.71
4	Occasionally	22	8.73
Total		252	100.00

Table 3 and Figure 1 depict respondents' frequency of visiting the library more in number daily. It is seen that a maximum of 49.60% respondents visit the library daily and the minimum of 8.73 per cent respondents visit occasionally. Out of 252 respondents 78 of the respondents visit once a week (30.95%) and remaining 27 respondents visits once a month (10.71%).

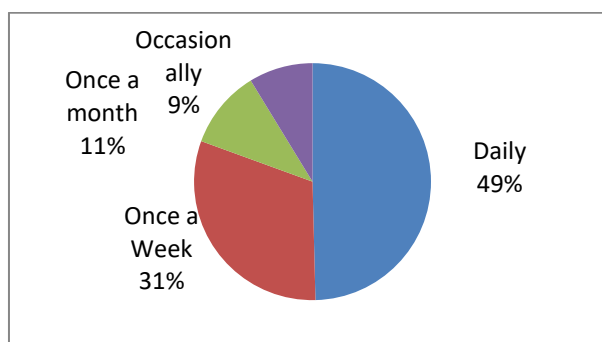


Figure 1: Frequency of Library Visits

Table 4: Purpose of Library Visits

S.No	Purpose	Frequency	%
1	Borrow/return books	115	45.63
2	To consult periodicals	31	12.30
3	To browse Internet	43	17.06
4	To access E-resources	63	25.00
Total		252	100.00

In the above table 4 and Figure 2, the data were analyzed. It is inferred that the purpose of visiting the library for Borrow/return books got the highest per cent of

45.63 followed by accessing e-resources (25%) and browsing internet (17.06%) in a library.

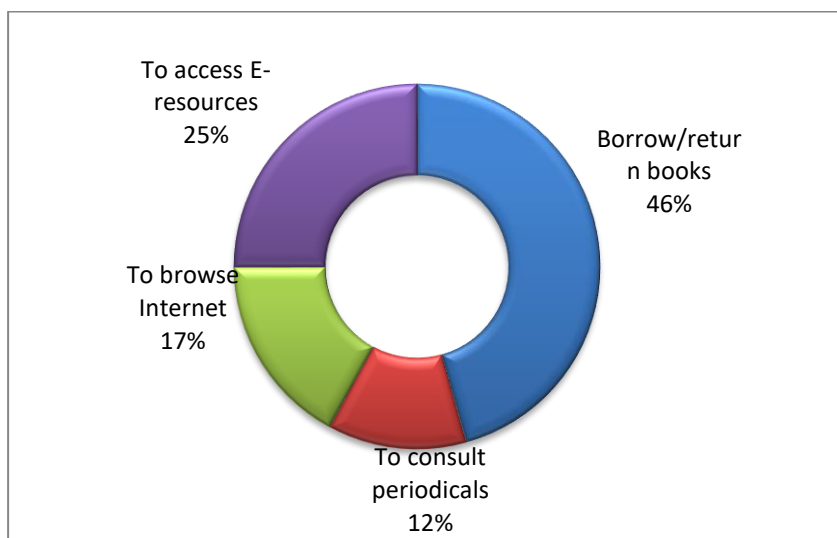


Figure 2: Purpose of Library Visits

Table 5: Access Points for Accessing e-Resources

S.No	Access Points	Frequency	%
1	Library	84	33.33
2	Department	68	26.98
3	Home	59	23.41
4	Hostel	29	11.51
5	Browsing Centre	12	4.76
Total		252	100.00

Table 5 and Figure 3 depict the places from where respondents access the E-resources. Majority of the respondents access the E-Resources from Library (33.33%) followed by department (26.98%), Home (23.41%), Hostel (11.51%) and Browsing centre (4.76%).

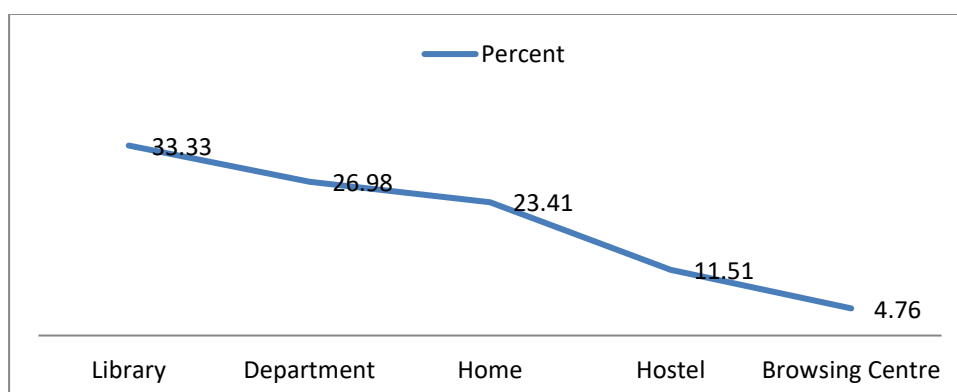


Figure 3: Access Points for Accessing e-Resources

Table 6: Resources Used for Getting Required Information

S.No	Resources	Frequency	%
1	CD ROM	15	5.95
2	OPAC	41	16.27
3	Internet	102	40.48
4	Online Database	13	5.16
5	E-Journal	81	32.14
Total		252	100.00

Table 6 and figure 4 explain the resources used by the respondents for getting required information in the university library. It is shown that 40.48 % of respondents used internet to access their required information followed by E-Journal (32.14%), OPAC (16.27%), CD-ROM (5.95%) and Online Database (5.16%). Therefore, it can be said that the majority of the respondents used the internet to access their information.

Table 7: Purpose(s) of using Electronic Resources

S.No	Purpose	Frequency	%
1	Project Work	65	25.79
2	Research Work	84	33.33
3	Communication	57	22.62
4	Subject Knowledge	46	18.25
Total		252	100.00

Table 7 shows the distribution of respondents by the purpose of using E-resources. In the above table 4.7, it is inferred that 33.33% of respondents used e-resources for research work, Project work (25.79%) and communication (22.62%) in a library.

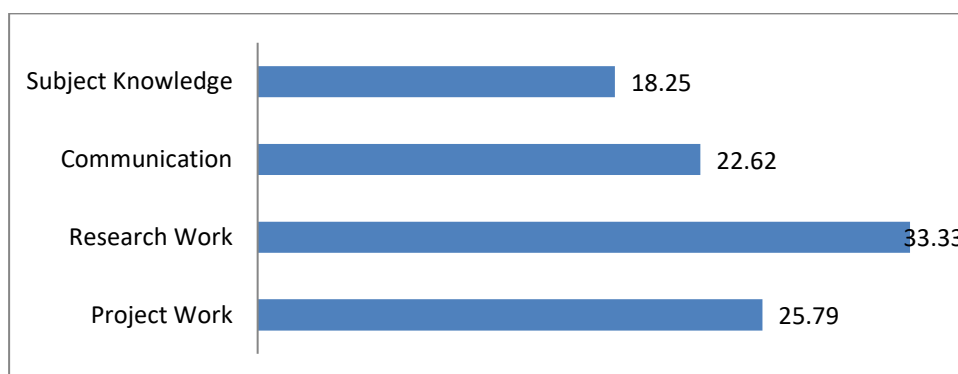
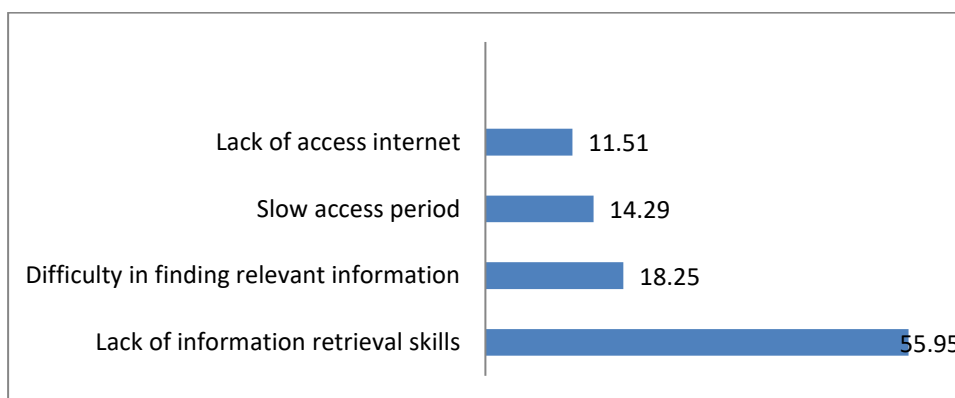


Figure 5: Purpose(s) of using Electronic Resources

Table 8: Positive Features of Electronic Resources

S.No	Features	Frequency	%
1	Ease of access	36	14.29
2	Usefulness	92	36.51
3	Ease of use	57	22.62
4	Reliability	25	9.92
5	Quick Response	33	13.10
6	Physical comfort	9	3.57
Total		252	100.00

Table 8 and Figure 6 shows that 92 (36.51%) respondents responded that usefulness is the main feature of electronic resources followed by Ease of use (22.62%), Ease of access (14.29%) and Quick response (13.10%).

**Figure 6: Positive Features of Electronic Resources****Table 8: Barriers in the Use of e-Resources**

S.No	Particulars	Frequency	%
1	Lack of information retrieval skills	141	55.95
2	Difficulty in finding relevant information	46	18.25
3	Slow access period	36	14.29
4	Lack of internet access	29	11.51
Total		252	100.00

The responses are tabulated and presented in the table 8. It is found that the barriers in the use of e-resources are Lack of information retrieval skills 141 (55.95%), followed by Difficulty in finding relevant information 46 (18.25%), Slow access period 36 (14.29%) and Lack of access internet 29 (11.51%).

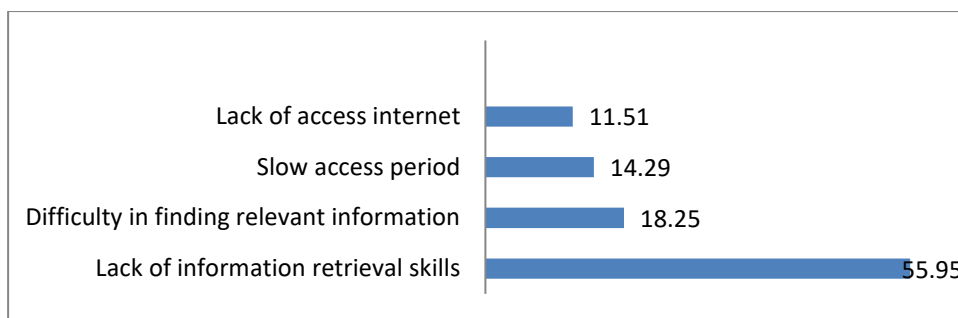


Figure 9: Barriers in the Use of e-Resources

Table 8: Need for Training on 'Information Retrieval Skills'

S.No	Particulars	Frequency	%
1	No	75	29.76
2	Yes	177	70.24
Total		252	100.00

It has been inferred the table 11 that 70.24 % of Respondents opined that there is a need for training on Information Retrieval skills while 29.76 % of respondents opined that there is no need for training on Information retrieval skills. Majority of the respondents stated that there is a need for training on information retrieval Programme.

Table 12: Information Retrieval Skills Vs. Gender - wise distribution

S.No	Statements	Male (n=82)		Female (n=170)	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1	Searching the electronic catalogue (OPAC) through the author, title and shelf searches.	4.54	.789	4.35	.957
2	Access of online databases	4.34	.789	4.20	.840
3	Download files from online databases	4.17	.843	4.19	1.022
4	Copying information into your storage device like Pendrive	3.99	.896	4.15	.961
5	Burning information into CD's	3.83	1.028	3.85	1.081
6	Use of Boolean operators	3.89	.889	3.95	.993
7	Use of search engines like Google scholar, Yahoo, Altavista etc.	3.96	.793	4.08	.906
8	Framing keywords for defining my search	3.95	.752	4.03	.893
9	Refining search to get better results	3.98	.785	3.98	.960
10	Use of other techniques to retrieve, when the website does not provide the save / print option	3.83	.872	4.01	.920
11	Use of library website to access e-resources	3.89	.801	3.92	.857
12	Download all kinds of file formats – word, excel, pdf, audio, video, jpg etc.	3.91	.892	3.95	.990
13	Conversion of e-resources from one file format to other	3.73	.969	3.93	.907
14	Use of mobile devices to retrieve data from e-resources	3.71	.909	4.02	.900
Total		3.98	0.858	4.04	0.942

Table 12 shows that the mean score value of respondents' information retrieving skills is 4.04 for female and 3.98 for male. It clearly illustrates that the maximum number of respondents agree with the items above. The mean value of information retrieval skills female respondents is high skills compared to male.

It can be seen that the item, "Searching the electronic catalogue (OPAC) through the author, title and shelf searches." has highest mean score as far as both male and female respondents 4.54 (S.D. 0.789) and male respondents 4.35 (0.957) are concerned.

Table 13: Frequency of using Electronic Resources

S.No	Statements	Male (n=82)		Female (n=170)	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1	Wikipedia	4.07	1.359	4.02	1.292
2	Internet	4.28	.985	4.26	1.022
3	Electronic catalogue	4.01	1.117	3.85	1.151
4	E Book	3.85	1.101	3.73	1.295
5	E Journals	3.73	1.238	3.61	1.364
6	AJOL	3.54	1.209	3.36	1.312
7	OARE	3.55	1.113	3.34	1.259
8	CD ROM database	3.68	1.064	3.46	1.255
9	EBSCOHOST	3.40	1.132	3.21	1.323
10	JSTOR	3.37	1.181	3.14	1.298
11	DOAJ	3.32	1.164	3.16	1.343
12	ERIC	3.39	1.194	3.11	1.368
13	Others	3.44	1.218	3.13	1.478
Total		3.66	1.160	3.49	1.289

Table 13 shows the mean score value of respondents' frequency of using electronic resources. It clearly illustrates that the maximum number of respondents agree with the items above. The mean value of both male and female respondents' frequency of using e-resources is compared and presented in the table. It can be seen that the item, "Internet" has highest mean score of female respondents 4.26 (S.D. 1.022) and male respondents with the mean score of 4.28 (0.985).

Table 14: Availability of Relevant Information on Electronic Resources

S.No	Statements	Male (n=82)		Female (n=170)	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1	Electronic database	3.68	.664	3.51	.794
2	OPAC	3.35	.880	3.15	.864
3	E- Journals	3.32	.844	3.21	.896
4	E- Books	3.30	.898	3.16	.963

5	Open Access Resources	3.16	.761	3.21	.872
6	EB SCOHOST	3.01	.896	2.97	.913
7	JSTOR	2.90	.897	2.96	.993
8	DOAJ	2.93	.900	2.98	1.023
9	Wikipedia	3.18	.739	3.22	.875
Total		3.20	0.831	3.15	0.910

Table 15 shows the mean score value of availability of relevant information on electronic resources. It clearly illustrates that the maximum number of respondents agree with the items containing the relevant information are readily available. The mean value of male (3.15) and female (3.20) respondents stated that the electronic resources are readily available.

Table 16: Awareness and Use of Electronic Resources

S.No	Statements	Male (n=82)		Female (n=170)	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1	Cambridge University Press	2.67	.589	2.61	.628
2	Economic & Political Weekly	2.55	.570	2.42	.650
3	Institute for Studies in Industrial Development (ISID) Database	2.50	.633	2.41	.701
4	Institute of Physics	2.38	.678	2.27	.677
5	JGate Plus (JCCC)	2.40	.664	2.31	.690
6	Oxford University Press	2.39	.643	2.30	.695
7	Project Muse	2.20	.637	2.34	.697
8	Springer Link	2.22	.648	2.28	.705
9	World e-Book Library	2.26	.625	2.40	.656
10	South Asia Archive (SAA)	2.29	.618	2.29	.700
Total		2.39	0.631	2.36	0.680

Table 16 shows that the mean score value of respondents' awareness and use of e-resources is 2.39 for male and 2.36 for female. It clearly illustrates that the maximum number of respondents agree with the items above. The mean value of awareness and use of e-resources male respondents' is higher compared to female.

Testing of Hypothesis - 1

H0: There is no significant difference between the male and female respondents and their responses towards purpose of visiting the library.

H1: There is a significant difference between the male and female respondents and their responses towards purpose of visiting the library.

Table 17: Gender-wise Distribution of Respondents and their Purpose of visiting the Library

S.No	Purpose of visiting the Library	Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
1	Borrow/return books	33 (40.24%)	82 (48.24%)	115 (45.63%)
2	To consult periodicals	4 (4.88%)	27 (15.88%)	31 (12.30%)
3	To browse Internet	18 (21.95%)	25 (14.71%)	43 (17.06%)
4	To access E-resources	27 (32.93%)	36 (21.18%)	63 (25.00%)
Total		82	170	252 (100%)

The responses of the Respondents as mentioned in the above table, 82 female 33 male respondents said that the purpose of visiting the library is for borrowing and returning the books (45.63%).

Chi-Square value = 10.976^a

Degree of freedom = 3

Value of $p = 0.012$ (Significant)

Level of significance = 0.05

The chi-square value when calculated is 10.976, degree of freedom = 3 and $p = 0.012$ which is less than 0.05. Hence it can be said that there is a significant difference between the male and female respondents and their responses towards purpose of visiting the library. Hence, the alternative hypothesis accepted.

Testing of Hypothesis 2

H0: There is no significant difference between the male and female respondents and their responses towards e-Resource access points.

H1: There is a significant difference between the male and female respondents and their responses towards e-Resource access points.

Table 18: Gender-wise Distribution of Respondents and their access points for accessing electronic information resources

S.No.	Access Points	Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
1	Library	33 (40.24%)	51 (30.00%)	84 (33.33%)
2	Department	23 (28.05%)	45 (26.47%)	68 (26.98%)
3	Home	15 (18.29%)	44 (25.88%)	59 (23.41%)
4	Hostel	6 (7.32%)	23 (13.53%)	29 (11.51%)
5	Browsing Centre	5 (6.10%)	7 (4.12%)	12 (4.76%)
Total		82	170	252 (100.00%)

The responses of the Respondents as mentioned in the above table, 51 female and 33 male respondents said that the library (33.33%) is their favourite access point for accessing e-Resources.

Chi-Square value = 5.464^a

Degree of freedom = 4

Value of p = 0.243 (No Significant)

Level of significance = 0.05

Hence, the null hypothesis accepted.

The chi-square value when calculated is 5.464, degree of freedom = 4 and p = 0.243 which is greater than 0.05. Hence it can be said that there is no significant difference between the male and female respondents and their access points for accessing electronic information resources.

Testing of Hypothesis 3

H₀: There is no significant difference between the male and female respondents and the tools used for getting required information.

H₁: There is a significant difference between the male and female respondents and the tools used for getting required information.

Table 19: Gender-wise Distribution of Respondents and the tools used for getting required information

S.No.	Getting Required Information	Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
1	CD ROM	3 (3.66%)	12 (7.06%)	15 (5.95%)
2	OPAC	12 (14.63%)	29 (17.06%)	41 (16.27%)
3	Internet	33 (40.24%)	69 (40.59%)	102 (40.48%)
4	Online Database	29 (35.37%)	52 (30.59%)	81 (32.14%)
5	E-Journal	5 (6.10%)	8 (4.71%)	13 (5.16%)
Total		82	170	252 (100.00%)

The responses of the Respondents as mentioned in the table 19, 69 female respondents and 33 male respondents said that the Internet (40.48%) is the primary tools used for getting required information.

Chi-Square value = 1.877^a

Degree of freedom = 4

Value of $p = 0.758$ (No Significant)

Level of significance = 0.05

The chi-square value when calculated is 1.877, degree of freedom = 4 and $p = 0.758$ which is greater than 0.05. Hence it can be said that there is no significant difference between the male and female respondents and the tools used for getting required information. Hence, the null hypothesis accepted.

Testing of Hypothesis 4

H0: There is no significant difference between the male and female respondents and their Purpose(s) of using Electronic Resources

H1: There is a significant difference between the male and female respondents and their Purpose(s) of using Electronic Resources

Table 20: Gender-wise Distribution of Respondents and their Purpose(s) of using Electronic Resources

S.No	Purpose(s) of using electronic resources	Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
1	Project Work	14 (17.07%)	51 (30.00%)	65 (25.79%)
2	Research Work	36 (43.90%)	48 (28.24%)	84 (33.33%)

3	Communication	18 (21.95%)	39 (22.94%)	57 (22.62%)
4	Subject Knowledge	14 (17.07%)	32 (18.82%)	46 (18.25%)
Total		82	170	252 (100.00%)

The responses of the Respondents as mentioned in the above table, 48 female and 36 male respondents said that they use e-resources for the purpose of research work (40.48%) followed by Project work (25.79%) and Communication (22.62).

Chi-Square value = 7.774^a

Degree of freedom = 3

Value of p = 0.051 (Significant)

Level of significance = 0.05

The chi-square value when calculated is 7.774, degree of freedom = 3 and p = 0.051 which is less than 0.05. Hence it can be said that there is a significant difference between the male and female respondents and their Purpose(s) of using Electronic Resources. Hence, the alternative hypothesis accepted.

7. MAJOR FINDINGS

- ❖ Almost half of the PG students visiting the library frequently for the purpose of borrow/return books. They said that e-resources are comfortable in use.
- ❖ Majority of PG students facing difficulty in finding relevant information and need lot of training on information retrieval skills.
- ❖ University PG students are more familiar with the electronic catalogue and searching author, title and shelf searches frequently. In this case, female students are more familiar than that of male students.
- ❖ Majority of the PG students used internet frequently.
- ❖ The university students are agreed that the availability of relevant information on electronic resources were enough for them.
- ❖ The female students have low awareness and use of e-resources when compared to male.
- ❖ Majority of the university PG students have to visit the library for the purpose of borrow/return books and to accessing e-resources. And there is some difference in their purposes of visiting the library between male and female students.

- ❖ The favourite access points of university PG students for accessing e-resources were library followed by department and home. The favourite access points are same among male and female students.
- ❖ Internet, online databases and OPAC were the tools used by university PG students for getting required information. And there is no difference between male and female in using tools for getting required information. Above information tells us that there is no aware among university students in use of e-journals.
- ❖ Majority of the University students use electronic resources for doing research and project work where in gender difference, there is some difference in their purposes of using electronic resources.

8. CONCLUSION

Based on the above findings, this study suggests that university PG students have better internet skills and searching strategies. The major differences were shown in purpose of visiting the library and usage of electronic resources. However, no significant differences were found in access points and tools used to retrieving the information. This result is similar to recent findings that basic retrieving strategies were enough for finding required information; however, the library should conduct the training on advanced retrieving techniques is required for university students. In response to these findings, we suggest that there is a need of adequate training on retrieval skills and how to access e-journals and e-books.

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