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Information Seeking Behaviour in Digital Environment: A study of Post Graduate Students at University of Kashmir

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Abstract

Information Seeking Behavior is a “*consequence of a need perceived by an information user, who, in order to satisfy that need, makes demands upon formal or informal information sources or services, which result in success or failure to find relevant information*”. The present study is an attempt to analyze the information seeking behavior of the PG students of social science faculties in University of Kashmir, Srinagar. The survey method was used as a data collection tool with the help of pre-defined questionnaire and interview was conducted during the month of November, 2019. There were 280 questionnaires distributed among PG students of social science disciplines, out of which a total of 245 duly filled questionnaires were returned back with a response rate of 87.5%. The findings revealed that application of ICT in libraries has greatly influenced the information seeking behavior of PG social science students in University of Kashmir.

Key words: Information, Information seeking Behaviour, University of Kashmir, IT, ICT,

Introduction

Current contemporary era is the period of information-based society where information is considered as the most significant resource that prompts genuine overall improvement of nations. Thus, 21st century leads in the information economy whereby information, access to it, and the possibility to utilize it to produce new knowledge turns into the most noteworthy skill that individuals need to gain to prevail in regularly changing conditions (**Adeogun, 2008**). In this milieu, the role of information has been perceived as a significant aspect of academic and scholarly activities of an individual. In any case, it is acknowledged that a predominant perception of the information needs and the information seeking behavior of an individual is preeminent to the achievement of the academic and research activities. This is in light of the fact

that information seeking is a key competency, which will be required as individuals embark their information sources to satisfy their information needs (**Thani & Hashim, 2011**). To elaborate the concept of Information Seeking behavior Wilson (2003) (as cited in Gaba and Singh, 2015) projected that *“information behavior covers all aspects of human information behavior, whether active or passive. Information seeking behavior is the act of actively seeking information in order to answer a specific query. Information searching behavior is the behavior, which stems from the searcher interacting with the system in question. This system could be a technological one, such as the searcher interacting with a search engine, or a manual one, such as the searcher selecting which book is most pertinent to their query. Information use behavior pertains to the searcher adopting the knowledge they sought.”* Moreover, **Pratap (2016)** states that in broader term *“it involves a set of action that an individual takes to express information needs, seek information, evaluate, and select information, and finally uses this information to satisfy his/her information needs.”* In this milieu, libraries and information centers being the centre of knowledge dissemination plays a major role in information transfer cycle. However, the role of the Libraries are not only limited to the preservation of reading materials but also to ensure that the information needs of the users are met in a most munificent manner (**Manjunathan & Babu, 2018**). Accordingly, understanding information needs and seeking behavior is main concern in the information service delivery of any library to fulfill information needs of their users in most appropriate manner (**Kumar and Naick, 2015**).

Literature Review

In view the immense importance of determining information seeking behavior among users, researchers across the globe have been conducting studies regarding the same to establish varied facts and facets associated with it. In this regard, **Manjunath and Babu (2018)** studied the information needs and information seeking behavior of research scholars in university. The study revealed that about the type of information resources preferred by the users, which are most e-resources besides highlighting problems faced by them. **Kumar and Naick (2015)** observed the information seeking behavior among engineering faculty to examine literature searching experience and skills among them besides assessing satisfaction level regarding their library. In tune with same **Kumar (2013)** assessed the information seeking behavior of research Scholars to gauge the level of awareness regarding varied library resources and services among them. In tune

with it numerous studies brought out the findings regarding the information seeking behavior of students mostly undergraduates and observed that they mostly needed academic and job-related information. Besides, highlighting about their information proficiency which emerged to be poor in addition to lack of proper awareness regarding library resources (**Howlader & Islam, 2019; Ferdows and Ahmed, 2015, Joo and Choi, 2015; Maybee, 2006; Callinan, 2005**). Moreover, **Partap (2016)** investigated information seeking behavior and satisfaction of library users in digital era and found out that respondents were not satisfied with the ICT based infrastructure, resources and services in the library. Contrarily, **Bansode and Nargide (2014)** revealed that preponderance of the respondents are aware and have plenty of knowledge regarding e-information resources. **Khazer, Jan and Ganaie (2016)** studied the Information Learning/Seeking Behavior of researchers and revealed that they mostly believe that it is easier to use electronic resources compared to print owing to various advanced features of electronic resources like ease of searching and browsing, etc. However, it is also observed that not many scholars are aware of various searching techniques and face many problems while seeking information in electronic environment including slow internet connectivity and electricity disruption. A study by **Kadir, Johari and Hussin (2018)** intended to explore the possible relationship between student's information needs and their information seeking behavior. The findings indicate that types of information, Information Sources used, user awareness, and user education have positive relationship with information needs of users. Moreover, **Gyesi (2020)** highlighted that student's information seeking behaviors include "*active search, passive search, and ongoing search*". **Gyesi (2020)** observed that the core information needs of students include "*career information, self-development, employment, course information, health, entertainment, sports, and religion while as their information seeking behaviors include active search, passive search, and ongoing search*". In tune with same **Yetunde and Samuel (2020)** investigated the information needs and information seeking and found out that students mostly use internet and textbooks, followed by newspapers and magazines.

About University of Kashmir

The University of Jammu and Kashmir (UOK) was founded in the year 1948. In the year 1969 it was bifurcated into two full-fledged Universities: University of Kashmir at Srinagar and University of Jammu at Jammu. The University of Kashmir is situated at Hazratbal in Srinagar. Over the Years University of Kashmir has expanded substantially. It has established Satellite Campuses at Anantnag

(South Campus) and Baramulla (North Campus) and three more Satellite Campuses at Kupwara, Kargil and Leh are being established to make higher education more accessible to people living in remote areas of Kashmir valley. Allama Iqbal library (the largest in the state) is presently the main Library, having fifty-two Departmental Libraries attached with different Departments, Centers, Directorates and the Institutes of the University. The Allama Iqbal Library has 21 Divisions in well decorated and centrally heated halls (First Floor only) managed by well qualified professional staff. It fulfills the academic needs of the University community represented by Faculty members, Research Scholars, P.G Students etc. in various disciplines.

Statement of Problem.

As information has become a necessity of everyone. Everybody needs information for some purpose or other. In the present ICT dominated information era information seeking behaviour of library users has witnessed transformation after transformation. The present study attempt to highlight the information seeking pattern of post graduate students in the faculty of Social Science of University of Kashmir.

Scope

The scope of the present study was confined to the PG students of social science faculty of University of Kashmir. The departments under the scope of present study are as follows

- Economics
- History
- Media Education Research Centre (MERC).
- Political Science
- Psychology
- Shah-i-Hamdan Institute of Islamic Studies
- Social Work
- Sociology

Objectives

- To examine the information seeking pattern of PG students in the faculty Social Science, in terms of their approach to use of library resources.

- To assess the problems faced by the students while using information sources and services provided by the library.

Methodology

The questionnaire method is adopted for achieving the objectives of the present study. After thorough review of literature on the basic theme of the study, questionnaire was framed by consulting the previous questionnaires on the same topic. The questionnaire was distributed among 280 PG students belonging to different subjects of social science faculty. Out of 280 questionnaires, 245 respondents responded with response rate of 87.5%. After that collected data is analyzed statistically in order to get some insight about the objectives framed for the present study.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

1 Gender of the respondents

Data gathered from the respondents regarding the gender. It is evident from **Figure 1** that 55.11% of respondents were males and 44.89% were females.

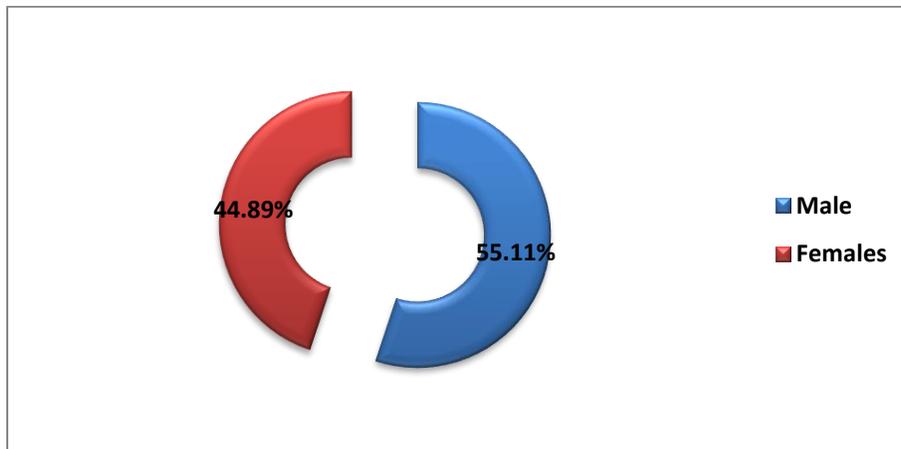


Figure 1: Gender of respondents

2 Frequency of Visit to Library

It is evident from **Table (1)** that majority of the users (35.51%) visit library rarely followed by (28.16%) and (19.59%) of users who visit library several times a week and on daily basis. However, the percentage of users in select social science disciplines who visit library during exam

days is (10.61%). Further, the portion of users who visit library once in a week is remarkably less (6.12%). However, these findings are in contradiction to earlier studies revealing that majority of students prefer to visit the libraries on daily basis (Jan & Ali, 2020; Gunasekera, 2010; Saikia & Gohain, 2013). *Statistically, it is revealed that frequency of visits to library is significantly associated with 'the information seeking behavior of students as $p < 0.01$.* The data collected regarding the frequency of visits to library by the users is presented in the **Table (1)**.

Table 1: Frequency of Visit

Frequency	No. of users	Percentage
Daily	48	19.59
Once in a week	15	6.12
Several times in a week	69	28.16
During exam days	26	10.61
Rarely	87	35.51
$\chi^2=72.04$; $df=4$; $p\text{-value}<0.01$		

3 Time Spent each day in Library

Library Users spend varied time duration for browsing desired information within libraries depending upon their information needs and the purpose of searching information. **Table 2** reveals that most of the students (48.97%) spend less than 2 hours every day to search their desired information , followed by (23.67%) and (17.14%) of students who spend 4-6 hours and 4 hours for the same. It is also obvious that only (10.20%) of them spend more than 6 hours every day for searching information in the library. These findings are in tune with study conducted by **Loan (2011)** indicating that majority of students spent 1-2 hrs in library. *The statistical observation $p < 0.01$ reveals that time spend each day by student have significant association with the information seeking behavior of students.*

Table 2: Time spent each day

Time Spent	No. of Users	Percentage
Less than 2 hours	120	48.97

4 hours	42	17.14
4-6 hours	58	23.67
More than 6 hours	25	10.20
$\chi^2=84.03$; $df=3$; $p\text{-value}<0.01$		

4 Purpose of Visit to Library

Users visit libraries with different purposes to satisfy their information needs. Respondents were asked to mention the purpose of visit to library. **Table 3** reveals that majority of users (44.89%) visit the library for borrowing the books. It is further highlighted that (25.71%) of users visit for reading newspaper/magazines,(15.51%) for using reference material, (7.34%) for using library e-resources and only (6.53%) of users visit the library for surfing internet. These findings corroborate with findings of studies conducted by **Jan & Ali, 2020; Saikia & Gohain, 2013** revealing that major purpose of library visit among students is borrowing of books. *It is statistically substantiated that the purpose of visits to library by the students has a significant association with their 'information seeking behavior' as $p<0.01$ which indicates that the purpose for which users visits varies greatly from user to user.*

Table 3: Purpose of visiting library

Purpose	No. of Users	Percentage
Surfing internet	16	6.53
Borrowing books	110	44.89
Using the reference material	38	15.51
Using e-resources	18	7.34
Reading newspaper/magazines	63	25.71
$\chi^2=124.24$; $df=4$; $p\text{-value}<0.01$		

5 Satisfaction of Students with Library Collection

There are variety of information sources acquired by libraries textbooks, reference books and journals. Success of library depends upon the collection possessed by the library. **Figure 2** indicates that (57.75%) of users are satisfied with the collection of the library, while as

remaining (42.25%) users are not satisfied with existing library collection. The findings are in tune with study conducted by **Veena and Kotari, 2016; Subramanian, Vinitha and Thirumagal (2019)** revealing that majority of users are highly satisfied with the collection in the library.

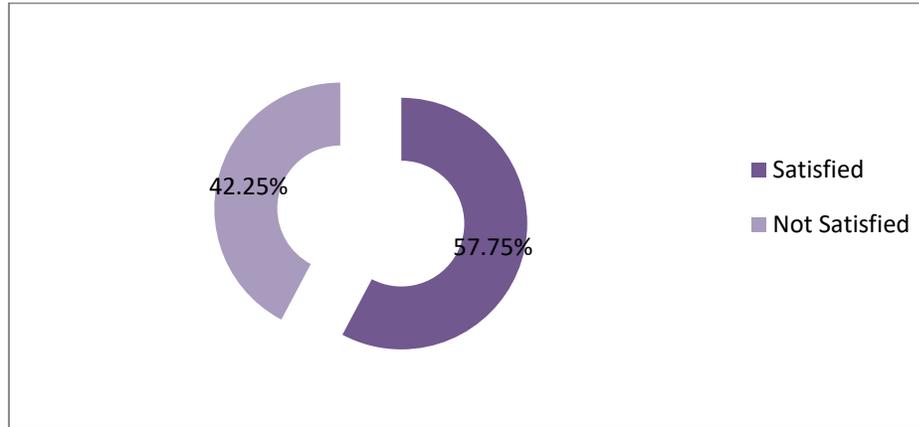


Figure 2: Satisfaction level with Library Collection

6 Format Used

At present information sources are available in multiple formats, thus, giving users a choice to opt for a most convenient formats viz., electronic and print. It is clearly depicted from **Table 4** that majority of the users (52.24%) prefer to use both electronic as well as print formats to obtain needed information. However, (31.02%) of users prefer to use print sources and the lowest proportion (16.73%) of them use electronic sources to achieve desired information. These findings are in tune with studies of **Jan and Ali (2020); Ojo and Akande (2005); Yamson, Appiah and Tsegah (2018)** revealing that majority of respondents prefer to use print resources compared to e-resources. *Statistically, it is observed based on p-value ascertained that format of sources is significantly associated with 'information seeking behavior of users' ($p < 0.01$).*

Table 4: Format used

Format	No. of Users	Percentage
Print	76	31.02
Electronic	41	16.73

Both	128	52.24
$\chi^2= 46.93; df= 2; p\text{-value}<0.01$		

7 Use of Formal Sources

Libraries are used by users for fulfilling their information needs. Different users use different sources of information to satisfy their information needs. It is clearly indicated by Table 4 that among the formal sources, majority of the users (66.53%) in select social disciplines use textbooks followed by (56.73%) of users who use reference books and (39.18%) of users use newspaper respectively. It is further revealed that Journals are being used by meager percentage users, i.e. .30.20%. These findings corroborated with the findings of previous studies conducted by **Jan and Ali (2020)**; **Agboola (2009)**; **Hammed and Osunrinade (2010)** revealing that majority of students prefer to use “Books” as major information source among library collection. *The statistical observation shows that the use of formal information sources is significantly associated with information seeking behavior of students as $p<0.01$. In other words, which means that the use of formal information sources varies significantly among students.*

Table 5: Use of Formal Sources

Formal Source of Information	No. of Users	Percentage
Textbook	163	66.53
Reference Book	139	56.73
Journals	74	30.20
Govt. Publications	0	0
Newspaper	96	39.18
Any other	15	6.12
$\chi^2= 262.16; df=5 ; p\text{-value}<0.01$		

Multiple responses allowed.

8 Search Tools Used by Users

Libraries are an important source to fulfill the information needs of the users. Libraries contain various tools for accessing the documents like library catalogue, indexing journals and abstracting journals etc. To know about the tools mostly used by the users for accessing the documents, collected data regarding the same and presented in Table 6. It is evident from the table that majority of users (56.32%) use references from the book for finding the documents followed by (26.53%) and (9.79%) of users use library catalogue and indexing journal for locating the needed book. It is further followed by (7.34%) who prefer to use abstracting journals for the same. However, these finding is in contradiction to previous study indicating that students mainly prefer to access internet as top source to search information (**Bhattacharjee, Sinha & Bhattacharjee, 2014**). *Statistically, it is corroborated that use of search tools by students is significantly associated with 'information seeking behavior as $p < 0.01$; which means that the use of search tools to access information varies from user to user.*

Table 6: Search Tools Used

Search Tools	No. of Users	Percentage
Library Catalogue	65	26.53
Indexing Journal	24	9.79
Abstracting Journal	18	7.34
References from the book	138	56.32
$\chi^2 = 149.60$; $df = 3$; $p\text{-value} < 0.01$		

9 Preferred Place for Accessing Information

Students in universities prefer to access the desired information from various places of access as per their convenience. They can access information in libraries, internet cafés or even from their hostels. From **Table 7** it is evident that users are using different places for accessing the information they are in need. Majority of the users (63.67%) prefer to access desired information in central library followed by users (18.36%) who prefer to access information at hostel. A meager proportion of users (11.83%) who prefer to use inter café for the same and least percentage of users (6.12%) access information from their departments. *Statistically, it is observed that the information access points have a significant association with the information seeking*

behavior of students as $p < 0.01$ which means that the choice of users differs significantly from one user to another

Table 7: Information Access Point

Access Point	No. of Users	Percentage
Department	15	6.12
Central Library	156	63.67
Hostel	45	18.36
Internet Cafe	29	11.83
$\chi^2=202.79$; $df=3$; $p\text{-value}<0.01$		

10 Problems Faced while Using Electronic Resources

Although, electronic resources possess a number of features that benefit users to satisfy their information needs but users come across a number of problems while using information from these resources. It is evident from **Table 8** that majority of the users (51.02%) face weak network problem while accessing electronic resources and (18.77%) of them face problem of subscription to less journal source titles. However, less portion of users (15.10%) and (10.20%) believes that they face the problem of less internet access period and electricity disruption issues while accessing e-resources in library. These findings are in tune with studies conforming that weak network connection and electricity disruptions are some of that major problems faced by users in accessing e-resources (Aina, 2014; Tariq & Zia, 2014). The *statistical observation revealed that the opinion of students about different problems faced by them while using the electronic information resources' varies significantly from user to user ($p < 0.01$)*.

Table 8: Problems in using electronic resource

Problems	No. of Users	Percentage
Electricity Disruption	25	10.20
Weak network	125	51.02
Less internet access time provided	37	15.10
Subscription to less journal sources	46	18.77

Other	12	4.89
$\chi^2= 160.69; df=4 ; p\text{-value}<0.01$		

Conclusion

The PG students of social science faculties use library in order to satisfy their information needs and library is doing their best of efforts to provide needed information in variety of formats. The study revealed that majority of PG students rarely visit the library, may be due to the lack of awareness regarding the facilities and services provided by their library. It was found that majority of students visit library in order to borrow books, reading newspaper/magazines and use of reference material. As far as satisfaction is concerned, more than (50%) of students are satisfied with the existing collection of the library. Furthermore, students prefer to use both print and electronic resources to fulfill their information needs. Preparation for exams and making of notes is the main reason for information seeking, thus it was observed from the study that majority of students use textbooks and reference books as formal source of information. As maximum proportion of students prefer to use central library for accessing the desired information. At last the study looked at problems faced by students while seeking needed information. Most of them pointed out that weak network, subscription to less journals and less internet access time provided are the main problem faced while using electronic resources.

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