

Information Seeking Behaviour of Academic Lawyers in Digital Age: A Comparative Study of Punjabi University Patiala, and Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, Punjab

SANJEEV SHARMA*
RAVINDER KUMAR**

This comparative study explored the information needs and information seeking behaviour of academic lawyers of Punjabi University, Patiala and Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar in digital age. The study examined the factors affecting the use of various e-resources. Questionnaire was the main instrument to collect the data. The study found out that the maximum respondents (74.6%) of PUP used internet frequently followed by 74.2% respondents of GNDU. Maximum percentage of respondents (52.8%) of PUP seek the information sometimes for prepare class notes followed by 41.8% respondents of GNDU. The study also found out that the maximum respondents (43.4%) of both the universities visit the library weekly to satisfy their information needs. Law students and faculty members were also used different online legal databases by applying different search strategies. The study also revealed some problems of academic lawyers while they used e-resources in digital environment.

Keywords: *Information, Information Seeking Behaviour, Academic Lawyers, E-resources, Digital, University*

1 INTRODUCTION

The present era is called the information era. The concept of life is vague without information. Society depends on information for all its activities.

* Associate Professor, Department of Library and Information Science and Registrar, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra

** Assistant Librarian, Maharshi Dayanand University-Centre for Professional and Allied Studies, Gurugram

Information has allowed a man to perform his activities in an efficient way. We are living in the information age. Information has now become one of the most basic needs of human being. We can reorganize scientific research and redefine the educational system only with the help of Information. Information plays a significant role in our lives. Information seeking behaviour means the way users seek information, the way they go about finding it and the way they use it. Information seeking behaviour is all which include the work of information searching, gathering, receiving and communicating. A large number of information available on web has affected the information seeking behaviour of every person. Each and every citizen should be aware about law and its use. Legal education is essential for lawyers as well as non-lawyers. It is also the responsibilities of lawyers to provide justice to common people who are not so much aware about law.

Academic lawyers require primary information for academic and research purposes in their profession. Academic lawyers use various legal information resources and services in digital environment when they seek their required legal information. In modern legal system, legal information is crucial equipment required for the daily life activities of academic lawyers to become good lawyers. They need accurate and reliable legal information so that they can make rational and vital decisions in future which directly involve human life.

2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objectives of the study were:

(i) To understand the purpose of information seeking behaviour of academic lawyers. (ii) To find out the awareness of various electronic information sources of academic lawyers. (iii) To identify the type of electronic information resources used by the academic lawyers. (iv) To find out the use of various electronic information sources of academic lawyers. (v) To identify the problems faced by the academic lawyers in using information in the digital environment.

3 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Review of related literature is an important aspect in the planning of any research study and the time spent on such a survey is a wise investment. It plays a very important role in the research process. It serves as a link between the old and new and between the known and yet-to-be known.

Bhardwaj¹ find out the perception of academic lawyers and practising lawyers about the awareness of legal information e-resources. The study also revealed the problems they were faced in accessing legal e-resources. 15.5% practising lawyers and 13% academic lawyers rated the legal e-resources poor.

Regarding the use of commercial e-resources, academic lawyers were more satisfied than the practising lawyers. However, practising lawyers expressed 'somewhat satisfied' in using open access e-resources. The study showed that practising lawyers were worried about the poor details on online legal information while using the legal e-resources. Academic lawyers pointed the too many login requisites as a major problem. Kaluba and Mulauzi² found out the information needs and information seeking behaviour of judges and lawyers in Lusaka Judiciary supreme courts. Maximum percentage (87%) of lawyers and judges searched the information regarding past decision. They also needed the information related to job presentation (76%), current awareness in law field (69%), case preparation (67%) and administrative of justice (60%). The study revealed that 98% lawyers and judges consulted court libraries, 76% online databases and 79% used personal libraries. 82% respondents were facing the problems of getting latest amended information in the legal fraternity. They were facing many others problems like limitation of time, overloaded information, lack of information diversity and poor internet connectivity. Khan and Bhatti³ studied the information need and information seeking behaviour of law faculty members of the University of Peshawar and its affiliated law colleges. This article explored the preferences of faculty members regarding various information channels, sources, library use patterns, methods, convenient study places, satisfaction level and problems encountered by them. It was found that the members used a variety of legal sources to satisfy their legal information needs. It was surprising that most of the respondents did their information seeking activities at home as they were not satisfied with sources, resources and IT facilities in their libraries. They visited library only for the newspaper reading and borrowing books on daily basis. Thanuskodi⁴ in his article entitled "Information-seeking behaviour of law faculty at central law college, Salem" examined that lawyers used information technology-based library sources and facilities less frequently compared with printed sources for their academic and research purposes. They preferred personal collections to satisfy their information needs. Faculty members were satisfied with the sources and collection of the central law college Salem's library. The Study also revealed that e-mail has the most popular internet application, whereas other internet-based services and applications are only used by a limited number of respondents.

4 SCOPE

The scope of the study was limited to the information seeking behavior of academic lawyers of Punjabi University, Patiala and Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar in the digital environment. In the study the users comprised LLB, LLM students, research scholars and faculty members.

5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was based on survey research. For the data collection Questionnaire method was used as a main instrument. According to the objectives of study all the questions were designed. The total population of the study was around 1900 including students and faculty members.

There are approximately 900 students and 24 faculty members in PUP and 1000 students and 20 faculty members in GNDU. 200 questionnaires per university were personally distributed to the faculty members and students. 195 questionnaires from PUP and 158 questionnaires from GNDU were received back. Out of 400 questionnaires distributed in both the universities, 353 questionnaires were received back with the response rate of (88.25%).

6 DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1: Purpose of Seeking Information

Sr. No.	n.(number)& %	PUP N=195				GNDU N=158			
		F	S	R	N	F	S	R	N
1	n	14	72	53	56	22	65	41	30
	%	7.2	36.9	27.2	28.7	13.9	41.1	25.9	19.0
2	n	60	103	15	17	67	66	17	8
	%	30.8	52.8	7.7	8.7	42.4	41.8	10.8	5.1
3	n	46	86	30	33	50	47	36	25
	%	23.6	44.1	15.4	16.9	31.6	29.7	22.8	15.8
4	n	85	82	20	8	92	42	16	8
	%	43.6	42.1	10.3	4.1	58.2	26.6	10.1	5.1
5	n	26	83	54	32	21	76	35	26
	%	13.3	42.6	27.7	16.4	13.3	48.1	22.2	16.5
6	n	28	66	46	55	23	65	39	31
	%	14.4	33.8	23.6	28.2	14.6	41.1	24.7	19.6
7	n	60	78	19	38	19	69	34	36
	%	30.8	40.0	9.7	19.5	12.0	43.7	21.5	22.8

1. Research Work, 2. Prepare the Class Notes, 3. Preparing Lectures, 4. Preparation for Examinations, 5. Participating in Seminars/ Conferences, 6. Planning of New Projects, 7. Moot Courts.

Academic lawyers were asked to indicate their purpose for information seeking. Table 1.1 shows the purpose of seeking information. Maximum percentage of the respondents (58.2%) of GNDU sought information for the preparation of examination frequently followed by 43.6% respondents of PUP. For the purpose of research work, maximum number of respondents (41.1%) of GNDU sought information sometimes which was more than 36.9% respondents of PUP. Maximum number of respondents (52.8%) of PUP sought

information sometimes for preparing their class notes. 42.4% respondents of GNDU sought information frequently for preparing class notes followed by 30.8% respondents of PUP. Preparing lectures was another purpose of seeking information by the maximum percentage of respondents (44.1%) of PUP sometimes which was more than 29.7% respondents of PUP. Maximum number of respondents (48.1%) of GNDU sought information for participating in seminars/conferences sometimes followed by 42.6% respondents of PUP. For the planning of new projects, maximum percentage of respondents (41.1%) of GNDU sought information sometimes followed by 33.8% of PUP. 24.7% respondents of GNDU and 23.6% of PUP sought information rarely for planning of new projects. Maximum number of respondents (43.7%) of GNDU sought information for the purpose of moot courts sometimes followed by 40.0% respondents of PUP.

Table 2: Frequency of the Library Visit

Universities	n.(number) & %	Daily	Weekly	2-3 Times in a month	Once in a month
PUP	n	61	74	27	7
	%	36.1	43.8	16.0	4.1
GNDU	n	28	68	32	25
	%	18.3	44.4	20.9	16.3
Total	n	566	592	146	61
	%	41.5	43.4	10.7	4.5

Table 2 reflects that how often academic lawyers visited the library. It was found that maximum number of respondents (44.4%) of GNDU visited the library weekly followed by 43.8% respondents of PUP. The table reveals that 36.1% of the respondents of PUP and 18.3% of GNDU visited the library daily. Maximum percentage of the respondents (20.9%) of GNDU visited the library 2-3 times in a month followed by 16.0% of PUP. Most of the respondents (16.3%) of GNDU visited the library once in a month followed by 4.1% of PUP.

Table 3: Use of Different Types of Information Sources

Sr. No.	n.(number) & %	PUP N=195				GNDU N=158			
		F	S	R	N	F	S	R	N
1	n	128	58	5	1	97	49	12	0
	%	66.7	30.2	2.6	0.5	61.4	31.0	7.6	0.0
2	n	99	85	5	1	92	54	8	2
	%	52.1	44.7	2.6	0.5	59.0	34.6	5.1	1.3
3	n	49	82	26	10	44	56	33	13
	%	29.3	49.1	15.6	6.0	30.1	38.4	22.6	8.9
4	n	37	51	24	27	20	49	26	26
	%	26.6	36.7	17.3	19.4	16.5	40.5	21.5	21.5
5	n	77	84	12	3	62	66	20	5
	%	43.8	47.7	6.8	1.7	40.5	43.1	13.1	3.3
6	n	78	52	16	16	31	68	25	14
	%	48.1	32.1	9.9	9.9	22.5	49.3	18.1	10.1
7	n	48	81	24	9	39	65	19	12
	%	29.6	50.0	14.8	5.6	28.9	48.1	14.1	8.9

1. Books, 2. Newspapers, 3. Law Reports, 4. Theses & Dissertations, 5. Dictionaries, 6. Encyclopedia, 7. Law Journals

Table 3 reflects the utilization of different types of information sources used by academic lawyers. Maximum percentage of respondents 66.7% of PUP used books frequently followed by 61.4% of GNDU. Newspapers were utilized by the maximum percentage of respondents 59.0% of GNDU frequently followed by 52.1% of PUP. Law reports were used sometimes by the maximum number of respondents (49.1%) of PUP followed by 38.4% of GNDU. The maximum percentage of the respondents (40.5%) of GNDU utilized theses & dissertations sometimes followed by 36.7% respondents of PUP. Maximum respondents (47.7%) of PUP used dictionaries sometimes more than 43.1% respondents of GNDU. Encyclopedia information sources were utilized sometimes by the maximum percentage of respondents (49.3%) of GNDU which was more than 48.1% respondents of PUP. Law journals were used sometimes by the maximum number of respondents (50%) of PUP followed by 48.1% respondents of GNDU.

Table 4: Use of Different Types of E-resources

Sr. No.	n.(number) & %	PUP N=195				GNDU N=158			
		F	S	R	N	F	S	R	N
1	n	55	63	9	15	44	59	17	8
	%	38.7	44.4	6.3	10.6	34.4	46.1	13.3	6.3
2	n	57	70	6	16	53	45	17	17
	%	38.3	47.0	4.0	10.7	40.2	34.1	12.9	12.9
3	n	63	65	21	12	61	47	15	15
	%	39.1	40.4	13.0	7.5	44.2	34.1	10.9	10.9
4	n	20	70	16	23	31	38	19	25
	%	15.5	54.3	12.4	17.8	27.4	33.6	16.8	22.1
5	n	81	48	10	17	71	45	22	9
	%	51.9	30.8	6.4	10.9	48.3	30.6	15.0	6.1
6	n	93	67	13	5	86	52	10	7
	%	52.2	37.6	7.3	2.8	55.5	33.5	6.5	4.5
7	n	71	51	18	15	55	34	25	13
	%	45.8	32.9	11.6	9.7	43.3	26.8	19.7	10.2
8	n	112	46	9	7	87	52	8	6
	%	64.4	26.4	5.2	4.0	56.9	34.0	5.2	3.9
9	n	135	37	5	4	115	32	7	1
	%	74.6	20.4	2.8	2.2	74.2	20.6	4.5	0.6

1. Databases, 2. E-Journals, 3. E-Books, 4. E-Theses & Dissertations, 5. Wikipedia, 6. E-mail, 7. Blogs, 8. Social Websites, 9. Internet

Table 4 reflects the usage of different types of e-resources used by academic lawyers. The maximum percentage of respondents (74.6%) of PUP used internet frequently followed by 74.2% respondents of GNDU. Utilization of databases was made sometimes by the maximum number of respondents (46.1%) of GNDU followed by 44.4% respondents of PUP. Utilization of databases was made frequently by the 38.7% respondents of PUP followed by 34.4% respondents of GNDU. E-books were most used by the maximum number of respondents (44.2%) of GNDU frequently which were more than 39.1% respondents of PUP. E-journals were used sometimes by 47.0% respondents of PUP followed by 34.1% of GNDU. The maximum percentage of respondents (54.3%) of PUP used e-theses & dissertations sometimes followed by 33.6% respondents of GNDU. Wikipedia was utilized frequently by the maximum number of respondents (51.9%) of PUP followed by 48.3% respondents of GNDU. E-mail was also used frequently by the maximum percentage of respondents (55.5%) of GNDU followed by 52.2% of PUP. More percentage of respondents (45.8%) of PUP used blogs frequently than 43.3% respondents of GNDU.

Table 5: Use Of Online Database

Sr. No.	n.(number) & %	PUP N=195				GNDU N=158			
		F	S	R	N	F	S	R	N
1	n	14	64	29	88	8	57	34	59
	%	7.2	32.8	14.9	45.1	5.1	36.1	21.5	37.3
2	n	17	50	47	81	14	57	26	61
	%	8.7	25.6	24.1	41.5	8.9	36.1	16.5	38.6
3	n	14	35	63	83	25	41	45	47
	%	7.2	17.9	32.3	42.6	15.8	25.9	28.5	29.7
4	n	8	27	63	97	4	42	47	65
	%	4.1	13.8	32.3	49.7	2.5	26.6	29.7	41.1
5	n	12	40	48	95	8	43	47	60
	%	6.2	20.5	24.6	48.7	5.1	27.2	29.7	38.0
6	n	21	38	59	77	27	40	32	59
	%	10.8	19.5	30.3	39.5	17.1	25.3	20.3	37.3
7	n	20	26	53	96	21	54	35	48
	%	10.3	13.3	27.2	49.2	13.3	34.2	22.2	30.4

1. Westlaw, 2. Manupatra, 3. UGC-Infonet Database, 4. SUPLIS, 5. JURIX, 6. SCC Online, 7. LexisNexis

Table 5 reflects the usability of online databases used by academic lawyers. The maximum percentage of respondents (49.7%) of PUP was never used SUPLIS online database which was more than 41.1% respondents of GNDU. Westlaw online database was never utilized by maximum percentage of respondents (45.1%) of PUP followed by 37.3% respondents of GNDU. Manupatra was used sometimes by the maximum percentage of respondents (36.1%) of GNDU followed by 25.6% respondents of PUP. 25.9% respondents of GNDU and 17.9% of PUP used UGC-INFONET database sometimes. SCC online database was used sometimes by the maximum percentage of respondents (25.3%) of GNDU and 19.5% of PUP. Maximum percentage of respondents (34.2%) of GNDU used LexisNexis sometimes followed by 13.3% respondents of PUP.

Table 6: Searching of E-document

Sr. No.	n.(number) & %	PUP N=195				GNDU N=158			
		F	S	R	N	F	S	R	N
1	n	72	65	35	23	76	53	17	12
	%	36.9	33.3	17.9	11.8	48.1	33.5	10.8	7.6
2	n	67	66	42	20	76	52	23	7
	%	34.4	33.8	21.5	10.3	48.1	32.9	14.6	4.4
3	n	92	52	16	35	92	42	18	6
	%	47.2	26.7	8.2	17.9	58.2	26.6	11.4	3.8
4	n	90	56	29	20	82	52	18	6
	%	46.2	28.7	14.9	10.3	51.9	32.9	11.4	3.8
5	n	39	72	47	37	44	45	34	35
	%	20.0	36.9	24.1	19.0	27.8	28.5	21.5	22.2

1. Keyword, 2. Author, 3. Title, 4. Subject, 5. Year

In order to search electronic documents academic lawyers were asked about the approaches they adopted. Table 1.6 reveals that most of the respondents (58.2%) of GNDU made search by Title frequently followed by 47.2% respondents of PUP whereas 26.7% respondents of PUP and 26.6% of GNDU made search by Title sometimes. Maximum respondents (48.1%) of GNDU made search by author frequently which was more than 34.4% of PUP. Subject approach was used frequently while searching e-documents by the maximum percentage of respondents (51.9%) of GNDU which was more than 46.2% respondents of PUP. Most of the respondents (36.9%) of PUP made search by Year sometimes while searching e-documents followed by 28.5% of GNDU.

Table 7: Use of Search Features

Sr. No.	n.(number) & %	PUP N=195				GNDU N=158			
		F	S	R	N	F	S	R	N
1	n	17	54	44	80	17	50	33	58
	%	8.7	27.7	22.6	41.0	10.8	31.6	20.9	36.7
2	n	23	48	32	92	28	57	34	39
	%	11.8	24.6	16.4	47.2	17.7	36.1	21.5	24.7
3	n	13	37	54	91	21	37	34	66
	%	6.7	19.0	27.7	46.7	13.3	23.4	21.5	41.8
4	n	24	45	34	92	37	40	32	49
	%	12.3	23.1	17.4	47.2	23.4	25.3	20.3	31.0

1. Boolean Operators, 2. Phrase Search, 3. Truncation Search, 4. Field Searching

Table 7 depicts how often academic lawyers used search features while searching their required information on internet. Boolean Operators were never

used by most of the respondents (41.0%) of PUP which were more than 36.7% respondents of GNDU. In GNDU, 31.6% respondents used Boolean Operators sometimes followed by 27.7% respondents of PUP. Maximum percentage of the respondents (47.2%) of PUP were never used Phrase Search while searching e-information on internet. Most of the respondents (46.7%) of PUP and 41.8% of GNDU were never used Truncation Search. Only 23.4% of the respondents of GNDU and 12.3% of PUP used Field Search frequently while searching electronic information.

Table 8: Problems in the Use of E-resources

Sr. No.	n.(number) & %	PUP N=195	GNDU N=158
		F	F
1	n	64	55
	%	32.9	34.8
2	n	43	52
	%	22.0	32.9
3	n	68	35
	%	34.8	22.1
4	n	70	40
	%	35.9	25.3
5	n	100	97
	%	51.3	61.4

1. Shortage of Computer, 2. Time Consuming, 3. Lack of Training, 4. Lack of Legal Databases, 5. Slow Speed of Internet Connection.

Academic lawyers were asked about the problems and difficulties they faced while using e-resources. Table 1.8 shows that maximum percentage of respondents (61.4%) of GNDU and (51.3%) of PUP faced the problem of slow speed of internet connection. 34.8% respondents of GNDU claimed about the problem of shortages of computers followed by 32.9% respondents of PUP. Maximum percentage of respondents (32.9%) of GNDU and 22.0% of PUP reported that searching information while using e-resources was a time consuming process. 34.8% of PUP and 22.1% of GNDU claimed about the lack of training while using e-resources. 35.9 % of the respondents of PUP and 25.3% of GNDU faced the problem regarding lack of legal databases.

7 CONCLUSION

The present study investigates the information needs, information skills and information seeking behaviour of law students and law faculty members. The study explores the various e-resources and legal databases used by the academic lawyers to satisfy their academic information needs in digital

environment. The needs of academic lawyers regarding the information are different but they more depend on newspapers, books, law journals and theses & dissertations. Majority of academic lawyers use internet to get e-information regarding their work or study. Academic lawyers use different legal databases to get e-legal information but not up to the mark. It might be due to the lack of e-resources and lack of knowledge about e-resources or legal databases. They also face some problems like shortage of computers, slow speed of internet connections and lack of training.

REFERENCES

1. BHARDWAJ (RK). Development of online legal information system: Lawyers' perceptions. *DESIDOC Journal of Library & Information Technology*. 39, 3; 2019; 131-139
2. KALUBA (C) and MULAUI (F). Information needs and information seeking behaviour of judges and lawyers: A study of the judiciary superiors court in Lusaka, Zambia. *The International Journal of Multi-Disciplinary Research*. 2, 6; 2019; 1-20.
3. KHAN (G) and BHATTI. Information needs and seeking behavior of law faculty members: A survey of the University of Peshawar and its affiliated law colleges. Available from internet: <<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/786>>.
4. THANUSHODI (S). Information seeking behavior of law faculty at Central Law College, Salem. Available from internet: <<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/282>>.