

# Information Needs and Information Seeking Behaviour of Undergraduate Students: A Gender Based Study of Government Degree College Boys and Government Women's Degree College Sopore

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**Abstract – Information Needs and Information Seeking Behaviour has been one of the burning issues in the field of Library and Information Science. For effective and efficient delivery and dissemination of information services to users, the need and information seeking behaviour of user community is a prime requirement. User study has always been the top priority of library professionals and rightly because user satisfaction is the ultimate objective any library/ information system. The basic motto of library i.e, the right information to the right user at the right time, can only be fulfilled when the library professional is fully aware about the information needs and information seeking behaviour of the user community. Gender disparity in any field has always been one of the prime targets of any researcher, because gender plays a crucial in defining the behaviour of people for any particular activity. Keeping these facts in view, the present has been taken up with an objective to understand and analyze the information needs and information seeking behaviour of undergraduate students across the gender in GDC Boys and GDC Women in Sopore area of Brarmulla District of Jammu and Kashmir State. Questionnaire method was adopted for data collection, the collected data was analyzed and the results showed that there is high level of disparity across the genders in information needs and information seeking behaviour.**

**Keywords: Information Needs, Information Seeking Behaviour, Gender Disparity, Information Services, Undergraduate Students, Collection Development, Sopore.**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Satisfying users' needs is the prime aim of the institutes of higher learning. Libraries assist in academic process including collection, organization and preservation of information resources applicable to the user community. Today libraries have a greater role in imparting required information and knowledge, and thereby shaping the career of students (Rashid 1998). In the present scenario, it is mandatory to keep documents in the conventional as well as digital form for wider access. The libraries have undergone a distinct transformation in recent years in terms of collection of resources, services offered and other library related affairs (Satao 2013). Information seeking behaviour is a broad term covering all aspects of information seeking including

passive or undetermined information behaviour. Information seeking behaviour is usually thought of as active or conscious information behaviour. Information searching describes the interactive elements between a user and an information system (Foruie 2007). Information Seeking Behaviour is defined as, "Those activities a person may engage-in, when identifying his or her needs for information, searching for such information in any way, and using or transferring that information" (Wilson 2000). Most times students' information seeking behaviour involves active or purposeful information seeking as a result of the need to complete course assignments, prepare for class discussions, seminars and workshops. In the course of seeking and using information for learning, students are subjected to a set of

complex influences ranging from personal to environmental. These issues are compounded by the proliferation of ICT in higher education and the emergence of digital information resources. Consequently, research in the area of information seeking focuses on the factors which might have an influence on the behaviour of undergraduate students particularly with respect to their gender.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Exhaustive review of literature related to the research is one of the early and vital steps in any research. It not only gives the research an insight about the works already done in the field but also enables him to understand the research tools and techniques followed by other researchers. Fizardani 1998 conducted a study on information needs and information seeking behaviour of graduate students at the University of Botswana and discovered that graduates do not have adequate training in the use of library and that some of the students are not aware of the services offered by the library. In another similar study, Baro, 2009 discovered that male students in the faculty are more aware and use the information sources available in the university more than the female students. He also found that there lies a significant difference between gender and service search strategies used by the undergraduate students. Hamade, 2010 conducted a study on utilization of library resources by the undergraduate students in Kuwait. The results showed that, the electronic resources and services provided by the academic library are not fully utilized and many students are still relying on printed resources more than electronic resources in their literature review papers. The cause is attributed among other factors, to lack of awareness and lack of competence in the use of library and information resources. Qureshi, 2008 carried out a study on information needs and information seeking behaviour of students in universities of Pakistan. The study highlighted that the leading factors that have a significant effect on the students' behaviour are educational, cultural background, surrounding environment and student participation which have a high positive impact on information needs and information seeking behaviour of students.

## 3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study was carried out keeping the following specific objectives in view:

- I. To study the information needs and information seeking behaviour of undergraduate students,
- II. To determine disparity in information needs and information seeking behaviour across the genders, if any,

- III. To analyze impact and influence of ICT on information needs and information seeking behaviour across the genders,
- IV. To assess the utilization of library resources and services by undergraduate students with respect to their genders.

## 4. METHODOLOGY

The present study is survey based as such questionnaire method was used for collecting data from the target population. A self-structured questionnaire was framed with consultation of experts from then related fields. The target population for the present study comprised of 4843 students from GDC (Boys) and 679 of GDC (Women) which accounts a total population of 5522, comprising of all streams across all semesters for the session 2018 viz, Medical, Non-Medical, Arts, Humanities, Commerce, Home Science, BCA, Faculties. Descriptive statistic techniques like tables of frequency counts and percentages were used in the analysis. Appropriate statistical software packages were used for data analysis and interpretation.

### 4.1 Sample Size

With the advancements in digital statistical formulations, many online statistical techniques are available for determining the sample size from a given population. For present study Sample size was determined by using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula which is considered one of the best for survey type researches. The formula for calculating the sample size is:

$$S = \frac{X^2 NP (1-P)}{d^2 (N-1) + X^2 P (1-P)}$$

S= required sample size

$X^2$  = the table value of chi square for 1 degree of freedom at the desired confidence level (1.96x1.96= 3.841)

N= population size

P= The population proportion (assumed to be 0.5)

d= degree of accuracy expressed as proportion, (0.05)

The population of the students and faculty under study was 14746. Further, to ensure an optimal sample size, the 95% confidence level was pre-assigned and a small sampling error (0.05) was fixed. Let the population distribution be 50%, and then applying the above formula:

$$S = 3.841 \times 5522 \times 0.5 (1-0.5) / 0.0025 (5522-1) + 3.841 \times 0.5 (1-0.5)$$

$$S = 359.24,$$

$$S = 360$$

Thus, the Sample size for the present study is 360.

#### 4.2 Administration of the Tool

As the present study is gender based, and for the feasibility of the study, the sample size drawn by the formula was divided into two equal halves, corresponding to each college under study. As such 180 questionnaires were administered among female students of GDC Women while equal no of questionnaires were administered among male students of GDC Boys. The questionnaires were distributed by the researchers themselves and personal assistance was provided in filling up the questionnaires wherever necessary. Finally the filled up questionnaires were collected back with an overall response rate of 85.55%.

**Table 1 Total Population and Sample Size of the Study**

Name of the College	Total Population	No. of Questionnaires Distributed	No. of Questionnaires Collected Back	Response Rate
Govt. Degree College for Boys, Sopore	4843	180	152	84.44%
Govt. Degree College Women, Sopore	679	180	156	86.66%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5522</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>85.55%</b>

### 5. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The primary data collected through questionnaire method was analyzed and interpreted with the help appropriate statistical tools and techniques and the results thus shown are represented in graphical and tabulated form wherever necessary.

#### 5.1 Frequency of Library Visit

**Figure1. Frequency of Library Visit by the Users**

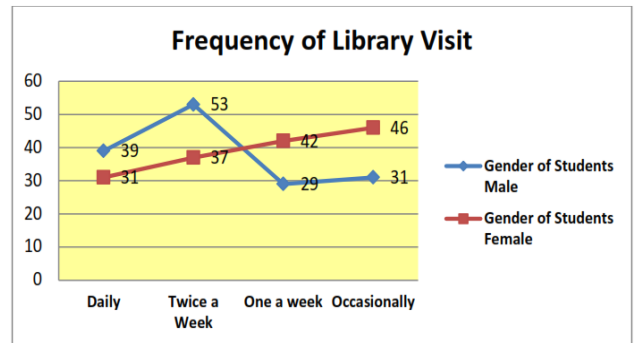


Figure1 reflects that most of male students visit library Twice a Week while as most of the female students visit library Once a Week. The percentage of Daily visitors with respect to female students is least in the column, whereas Occasional visitors with respect to male students are least in the column.

#### 5.2 Types of Information Resources Preferred

**Table 2. Types of Information Resources Preferred by the users**

Information Resources Preferred	Gender of Students	
	Male	Female
Textbooks	72 (47.36)	87 (55.76)
Reference Books	37 (24.34)	32 (20.51)
Journals	08 (05.26)	09 (05.76)
Digital Resources	35 (23.02)	28 (17.94)
<b>Total</b>	<b>152 (100)</b>	<b>156 (100)</b>

*Figures in the parenthesis represent percentages*

Table 2 shows that, majority of the students prefer Textbooks across the genders which are 47.36% in case male students and 55.76% in case of female students followed by the Reference Books in both genders. However the least preferred sources are Journals in both the genders.

**Table 3. T Test for table 2 assuming unequal variance**

T-Results	Male	Female
Mean	38	39
Variance	688.67	1124.67
Observations	4.00	4.00
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0.00	
df	6.00	
t Stat	<b>-0.05</b>	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.48	
t Critical one-tail	1.94	
P(T<=t) two-tail	<b>0.96</b>	
t Critical two-tail	<b>2.45</b>	

The results of the T test signify that the Calculated P Value is 0.96 which is significantly less than the Critical Value 2.45 at Degree of Freedom 6. These figures give us enough statistical evidence to accept the null hypothesis as such we may conclude that there is no significant difference in the preference given to library resources by male and female students.

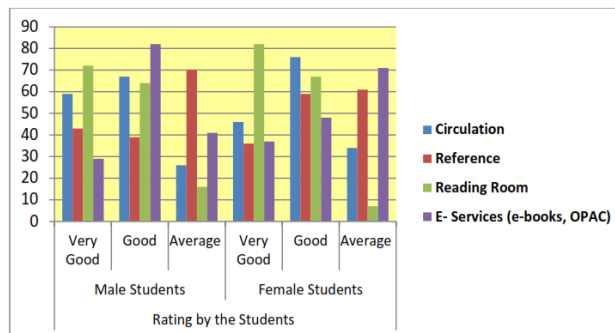
**5.3 Services Provided by the Library**

**Table 4. Services provided by the Libraries and their Ratings by the Students**

Library Services	Rating by the Students					
	Male Students			Female Students		
	Very Good	Good	Average	Very Good	Good	Average
Circulation	59 (38.81)	67 (44.07)	26 (17.10)	46 (29.48)	76 (48.71)	34 (21.79)
Reference	43 (28.28)	39 (25.65)	70 (46.05)	36 (23.07)	59 (37.82)	61 (39.10)
Reading Room	72 (47.36)	64 (42.10)	16 (10.52)	82 (52.56)	67 (42.94)	07 (04.48)
E- Services (e-books, OPAC)	29 (19.07)	82 (53.94)	41 (26.97)	37 (23.71)	48 (30.76)	71 (45.51)
<b>Total</b>	<b>152 (100)</b>			<b>156 (100)</b>		

*Figures in the parenthesis represent percentages*

Table 4 indicates that most of the students from both genders rate Circulation Services of their respective libraries as Good, similarly in case of Reference Services, the highest number of students from both genders rate it as Average. While in case of Reading Room Services students from both the genders rate it as Very Good. However in case of E-Services there is an evident disparity across the genders as most of the male students rate it as Good and most of the female students rate it as Average.



**5.4 Impact of E-Resources on the User Behaviour**

**Table 5. Level of Impact of E-Resources on User Behaviour**

Impact of E-Resources	Gender of Students	
	Male	Female
High Impact	31 (20.39)	26 (16.66)
Partial Impact	34 (22.36)	32 (20.51)
Not Sure	38 (25.00)	54 (34.61)
Least Impact	26 (17.10)	30 (19.23)
No Impact	23 (15.13)	14 (08.97)
<b>Total</b>	<b>152 (100)</b>	<b>156 (100)</b>

*Figures in the parenthesis represent percentages*

Table 5 reflects that majority of the students in both genders are Not Sure about the impact of E-Resources on their information behaviour. However, 20.39% male and 16.66% female students feel E- Resources have High Impact on their information behaviour.

**Table 6. T Test for table 5 assuming unequal variance**

T-Results	Male	Female
Mean	30.40	31.20
Variance	36.30	211.20
Observations	5.00	5.00
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0.00	
df	5.00	
t Stat	-0.11	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.46	
t Critical one-tail	2.02	
<b>P(T&lt;=t) two-tail</b>	<b>0.91</b>	
<b>t Critical two-tail</b>	<b>2.57</b>	

The results of the T test signify that the Calculated P Value is 0.91 which is significantly less than the Critical Value 2.57 at Degree of Freedom 5. These figures give us enough statistical evidence to accept the null hypothesis as such we may conclude that there is no significant difference in the Impact of E-Resources on the information behaviour across the genders.

**5.5 Attitude of Library Staff towards the Users**

**Table 7. Rating scale of Attitudes of Library Staff towards the Users**

Attitude of Library Staff	Gender of Students	
	Male	Female
Highly Cooperative	15 (09.86)	41 (26.28)
Very Cooperative	24 (15.78)	46 (29.48)
Cooperative	39 (25.65)	53 (33.97)
Non Cooperative	41 (26.97)	09 (05.76)
Highly Non Cooperative	33 (21.71)	07 (04.48)
<b>Total</b>	<b>152 (100)</b>	<b>156 (100)</b>

*Figures in the parenthesis represent percentages*

Table 7 highlights that most of the male students feel that attitude of library staff is Non Cooperative while as maximum number of female students are of the opinion that the attitude of library staff is Cooperative. Similarly least number of male students find their library staff as Highly Cooperative while as least number of female students find their library staff as Highly Non Cooperative.

**Table 8. T Test for table 7 assuming unequal variance**

T-Results	Male	Female
Mean	30.4	31.2
Variance	117.8	467.2
Observations	5	5
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	6	
t Stat	0.07	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.47	
t Critical one-tail	1.94	
<b>P(T&lt;=t) two-tail</b>	<b>2.94</b>	
<b>t Critical two-tail</b>	<b>2.44</b>	

The results of the T test signify that the Calculated P Value is 2.94 which is significantly greater than the Critical Value 2.44 at Degree of Freedom 6. These figures give us enough statistical evidence to reject the null hypothesis as such we may conclude that there is a significant difference in the attitude of library staff towards the users by male and female students.

**6. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

On the basis of the data analysis and interpretation following finding have been drawn:

- i. Most of male students visit library twice a week while as most of the female students visit library once a week, which is not a

promising picture from a librarian point of view especially at the college level. Every effort should be made to improve and enhance the frequency of students visiting the library.

- ii. Most of the students prefer textbooks across the genders followed by the reference books. However in the age of information and research orientation, the results of the study are shocking as the least preferred sources of information are Journals and e-resources in both the genders. Hence due emphasis needs to be laid for the better utilization of innovative information resources like e-journals, e-magazines, educational web-portals and others by the students.
- iii. Majority of the students in both genders are not sure about the impact of e- resources on their information behaviour. ICT has highly impacted the information industry from generation to dissemination. In this digital age major portion of library collections are in digital form, but unfortunately students are not made aware of such resources and services in their respective libraries.
- iv. Most of the male students feel that attitude of library staff is non-cooperative while as maximum number of female students are of the opinion that the attitude of library staff is cooperative. There appears a wide disparity among the genders in terms of attitude of library staff. However the professional and cooperative nature of the library staff is always pre-requisite for a professional librarian.

**7. CONCLUSION**

The use of information has gained much importance in every sphere of human activity during the past two decades or so. As such students' researchers and faculty experience varied information needs and access different information sources viz-a-viz their need and requirement with the ease of accessibility and availability. The packaging and consolidation of information products in different and multiple formats has a great impact in the information seeking behaviour and thus is becoming a major challenge for library professionals for improving the information infrastructure and thereby delivery of information products and services. It may be concluded from the results of the study that every possible step should be taken at priority on part of the library staff to improve the information seeking behaviour of the students at college level. The findings of the study impress upon the importance of providing access to information resources and products to the students and revamp the library

system in-tune to the needs and requirements of the user community. Library staff also needs to be given much importance in terms of orientation and training programs at regular intervals to enhance and uplift their professional ethics and skills, so as to meet the emerging demands of the user community.

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