

Influence of Gender Difference on Information-seeking Behaviour of the Students

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ABSTRACT

This study was an attempt to assess whether gender as a variable is associated with the information-seeking behaviour of post-graduate students. A descriptive survey research design used for study, and data were collected with the help of a structured questionnaire. A total of 378 questionnaires were returned out of a total of 464 that were sent out. Most components of information seeking behaviour were shown to be significantly different between males and females. Findings of the study showed that gender influenced the frequency of library visits, the goal of seeking information, information sources consulted, and the purposes of library visits as the calculated P-values for all these aspects, i.e., .0037, .0044, .0029, .0026 respectively are less than the significance level of .01. while not significantly associated with the amount of time students spend in the library, internet usage for specific purposes, browsing of various e-resources, and the extent of e-resource usage, as the calculated P-value for these aspects is higher than the significance level (0.10). The findings could have implications for psychological study and practise, particularly in the areas of educational institutions, library science, cognitive development, and training and performance appraisal.

Key words: Information -seeking behaviour, Post-graduate students, Gender-differences, University

INTRODUCTION

The practise of gathering information from diverse sources, such as formal, informal, and electronic sources, is known as information seeking. It is the process through which people look for and use information in order to meet their information needs. The manner in which people seek information differs from one person to another. The personal, emotional, educational, and demographic aspects of the person seeking information influence his or her information-seeking behaviour. Due to their various

characteristics and requirements, students' information-seeking behaviour has also varied. As a result of the digital revolution, information distribution services have changed dramatically. Most people find it challenging to appreciate the dynamic causes, techniques, and implications of these changes in the information environment. Some social psychology depicts physical, mental, and social disparities between men and women in society. Gender has been identified as a possible effect variable in information seeking behaviour in various studies. Hsieh and Wu (2015) discovered that

children's information seeking patterns are influenced by their gender. Boys cared a lot about information accessibility, according to the study, and tended to surf rapidly and accomplish their task by clicking each symbol and haphazardly glancing over the contents. The females, on the other hand, valued information diagnostically more and searched more cautiously, pausing the cursor on the screen for longer periods of time. Ahmad (2019) conducted research with the goal of understanding and analysing the information demands and information seeking behaviour of undergraduate students in the Barmulla District of Jammu and Kashmir State. The study's findings revealed that there is a significant gap in information demands and information seeking behaviour between men and women. According to the study, the majority of male students go to library twice a week, whereas the majority of female students go once a week. According to research, textbooks are preferred by the majority of students across the genders, with 47.36 per cent of male students and 55.76 per cent of female students preferring them.

Gender as a variable could be useful in better understanding the cognitive and social environment of human information processing, and it could have major implications for information dissemination services and systems. As a result, in order to better support university students in their information-seeking procedures, it is vital to explore gender-specific disparities in their information-seeking behaviours.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research was carried out at Rajasthan University in Jaipur. Students enrolling in PG degree programmes for the academic year, 2019-2020 at the University of Rajasthan

Jaipur's eight faculties (Science, Arts, Commerce, Education, Fine Arts, Law, Social Science, and Engineering and Technology) were included in the study. A descriptive survey study design was used to collect data via a questionnaire. Questionnaires were distributed to 464 randomly selected postgraduate students from all eight faculties at the University of Rajasthan Jaipur. A total of 378 completed questionnaires were received, reflecting a response rate of 81.46 per cent. Statistical techniques ie:- percentage, Chi-square test, t-value were used for interpreting the data and testing the hypotheses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Dependent variable of the study is "information seeking behaviour", which means, students' way of information exploration by using the library and the Internet (information resources). The selected aspect of information seeking behaviour taken as dependents variable were: The purpose of seeking information, types of information sources consulted, Frequency visits of using the library, time spent in the library, purposes of use of the library, purpose of using the internet, Information resources browsed on the internet.

The association between independent variable (gender) and information seeking behaviour is presented below:

1. Gender and purpose-wise seeking information: Table- 1 reveals the relation between the gender and the purpose-wise seeking information by the respondents.

Table 1: Gender and purpose-wise seeking information

n=378

Purpose of information seeking	Gender				Total
	Male		Female		
	f	%	f	%	
Routine academic information needs	121	48.4	129	51.6	250
Career counselling and employment	128	55.6	102	44.4	230
Students' union election	67	34.7	126	65.3	193
Library related	48	46.6	55	53.4	103
Social security benefits	65	42.5	88	57.5	153
Co-curricular activities	60	54.5	50	45.5	110
Associated curricular activities	94	49.5	96	50.5	190
Competency development	115	56.1	90	43.9	205
Research work	91	48.9	95	51.1	186

X² value =28.1596, df= 8, The P-Value is .000448. Significant at $p < .01$.

Table-1 presents that among 250 students who sought information for academic information (routine), 51.6 per cent were female students and 48.4 per cent were male students. In a total of 193 respondents who sought information regarding the students' union election, the majority of students were female (65.3%) as compared to male peers (34.7%). Male respondents made up more than half of those seeking information on career counselling and employment (55.7%), competency development (56.1%), and co-curricular activities (54.6%). Female respondents were more concerned with social security benefits (57.5%), library-related information (53.4%), and research work information (51.1%). The results are in accordance with the findings of Khorsrowjedrdi and Iranshahi (2011).

Thus the results show that there is a considerable difference between respondents' gender and the various purposes for which they seek information.

This can be statistically proved as the P-value (.0004) is less than the significance level (0.01) at 8 degrees of freedom. Hence it is statistically defensible. As a result, the null hypothesis must be rejected. It shows that there is an association between the variables being compared. Thus, we conclude that gender is associated with the purpose of

seeking information by the respondents. Tilahun and Natarajan (2016) and Halder (2013) focused that gender as a major factor that influences the information requirements and information-seeking behaviour of students.

As compared to female students, Male students seek information more regarding competency development, career counselling, co-curricular activities, and related to students' union elections, it may be due to the fact that males are more interested and active for these activities, whereas female students seek information about social security benefits because they appear to be more concerned about security than males.

2. Gender-wise information sources consulted: Figure -1 shows the comparison between type of information sources consulted and gender of the respondents.

Findings indicate that 56.6 per cent of respondents are male and 43.4 per cent are female who consult academic libraries (n=286). Out of the total number of respondents consulting faculty (n=240), female respondents are a bit higher (52.9%) than male respondents (47.1%). The results also show that males have a slightly higher internet score than females. Among respondents consulting informal sources like

family and friends, male and female respondents accounted for 58.0 per cent and 42.0 per cent, respectively. University administration was also consulted by a higher number of male (72.7%) as compared to female respondents (27.9%).

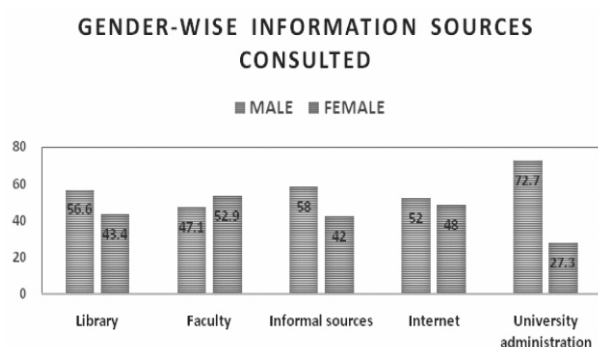


Figure 1 : Gender-wise information sources consulted

χ^2 value =16.0279, df= 4, The P-Value is. 00298. Significant at $p < .01$.

The above Figure -1 clearly depicts that the genders of the students and the information sources consulted by the respondents differed significantly. The P-value (.00298) is lower than the significance level (0.01). Thus, it calls for the rejection of the null hypothesis. It reveals that there is an association between the compared variables.

Results show that females respondents consult faculty most for information and males consult university administration more as compared to female respondents. This may be due to that females are more likely to go with hierarchy and males seem to go directly to administration or higher levels of information system.

3. Gender wise usage of library: Figure- 2 explores the relation between gender of respondents and frequency of library usage in a university environment.

It is found from Figure-2 that, out of total number of respondents who are using the library every day (n=133), males account for 64.66 per cent more of the total than female respondents (35.3%). While 55.6 per cent of

the students who use library every alternative day are female, 44.4 per cent are male.

Out of 83 respondents using the library once a week, 56.6 per cent are male and 43.4 per cent are female respondents. Among the total number of respondents using the library monthly (n=17) , 64.7 per cent of them are female and 35.3 per cent are male respondents. The ratio of respondents who visited the library fortnightly and occasionally skewed towards female respondents.

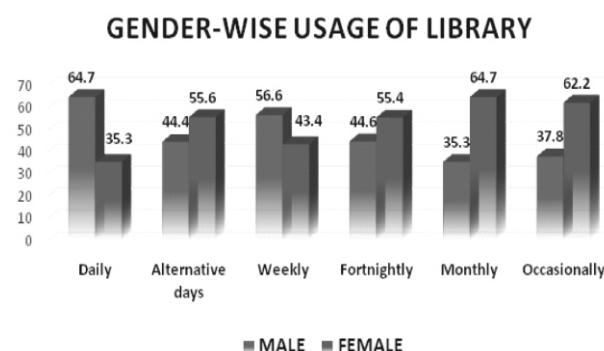


Figure 2: Gender-wise usage of library

χ^2 value =17.4189, df= 5, The P-Value is. 00377. Significant at $p < .01$.

The above Figure-2 shows that there is a significant difference between gender and the frequency with which students use libraries. The P-value (.00377) is less than the significance level (0.01) for 5 degrees of freedom, hence it is statistically defensible. As a result, the null hypothesis must be rejected. It demonstrates that there is a link between the variables being compared. As a result, we conclude that post-graduate students' use of the library is associated to their gender. The study is in line with the study of Tilhahun and Natarajan (2016), which states that gender influences the frequency of visits to the library. Above description shows that boys are more regular in visiting the library daily and girls visit the library more on alternate days,

occasionally and fortnightly. This may be because of differ lifestyle between males and females. Girls usually study in hostel rooms only as there are fewer disturbances compared to boys' hostels. Day scholar girls may have household responsibility also adverse to boys. Maybe that's why the majority of boys visit the library daily and girls visit on alternate days.

4 Gender-wise purposes of use of library:

Table 2 depicts that out of 288 respondents used for borrowing books, a majority were female (52.1%). Among the respondents who

visited the library to access reference resources, 56.2 per cent were male and 43.8 per cent were female. Out of 227 respondents using the library to access periodicals, 52.0 per cent were male and 48.0 per cent were female. Similarly, using e-resources, reading newspapers and going to the library solely for study purposes are skewed towards male students.

Furthermore, among 197 respondents who visited libraries for thesis and project reports, the percentage of females (55.3%) was higher than males (44.7%).

Table 2: Gender-wise purposes of use of the library

n=378

Purposes of use of the library	Gender				Total
	Male		Female		
	f	%	f	%	
Borrowing books	138	47.9	150	52.1	288
Reprography service	96	66.2	49	33.8	145
Access thesis and project reports	88	44.7	109	55.3	197
Access reference resource	150	56.2	117	43.8	267
Access e-resource	63	60.0	42	40.0	105
Read news paper	132	54.0	113	46	245
Study purpose only	138	53.3	121	46.7	259
Access periodicals	118	52.0	109	48.0	227

χ^2 value =21. 9229, df= 7, The P-Value is .00262. Significant at $p < .01$

Therefore it is clear from the above data, that there was a marginally significant difference between the different purposes of use of the library and the gender of the respondents. It can be statistically justified as the P-value (0.00262) is smaller than the level of significance (0.01) at 7 degrees of freedom. Thus, the null hypothesis must be rejected. It depicts that there is a relation between the compared factors. Thus, we conclude that gender is associated with the purposes of use of libraries by the respondents.

5. Gender-wise time spent in the library:

Figure- 3 shows that, out of total of respondents (n=87) who spent time up to one

hour per day on library visits, males were 58.6 per cent and females were 41.4 per cent. Results also show that who spent one to two hours per day on library visits (n=117), 54.7 per cent were male and 45.3 per cent were female. Among the respondents 103, who spent two to three hours per day on library visits, males were 57.3 per cent and females, 42.7 per cent.

A higher proportion of male respondents (60.4%) spend three to four hours per day in libraries than females (39.6). A similar trend was also followed in the case of spending more than four hours per day on library visits.

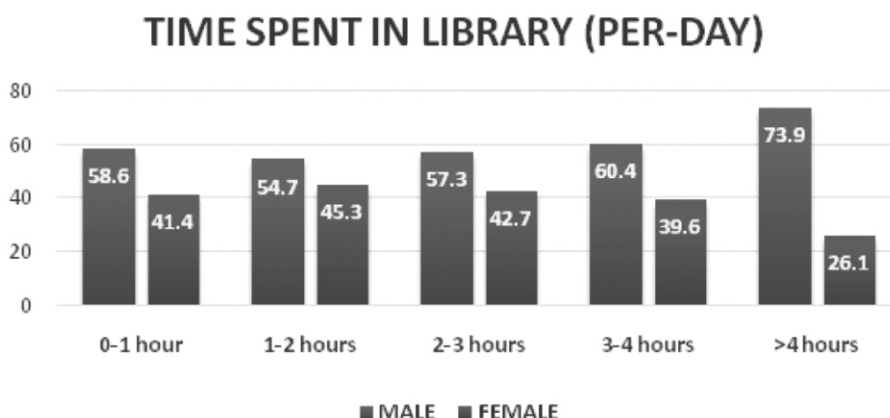


Figure-3 : Gender-wise time spent in the library

χ^2 value=3.0258, df=4, The P-Value is .5535. Not significant

It is clear from the figure-3 that there was no significant difference between the time spent by students in the library and genders of the respondents.

The P-value (0.5535) is higher than the significance level (0.10) at 4 degrees of freedom, hence it is statistically proved. As a result, the null hypothesis must be accepted.

Thus, it is concluded that gender has no influence on the time spent by the students at the library.

6. Gender and the purpose-wise usage of internet: Table 3 depicts the respondents' gender and the purpose-wise usage of the internet.

Table 3: Gender and the purpose-wise usage of internet

n=378

Purpose of usage of internet	Gender				Total
	Male		Female		
	f	%	f	%	
Reading	111	50.4	109	49.6	220
Literature search	130	46.4	150	53.6	280
Employment/entrepreneurship purpose	76	55.5	61	44.5	137
To update knowledge	137	52.7	123	47.3	260
Means of communication	93	54.7	77	45.3	170
Database search	91	53.5	79	46.5	170
Research purpose	114	48.7	120	51.3	234

χ^2 value = 5.612, df = 6, The P-Value is .4679. Not significant at $p < .10$.

It is found from Table 3 that, among the 220 respondents using the internet for the purpose of reading on the Internet, male students (50.4%) and female students (49.6%) were more or less equal. However, among respondents (280) literature

searches, 46.4 per cent were male and 53.6 per cent were female.

Out of 170 respondents using the internet for database search, 53.5 per cent were male and 46.5 per cent were female. However, the per cent of respondents using the internet for

research purposes among females is a bit higher than their male counterparts. Of the 170 respondents using the internet for communication purposes, 54.7% were males and 45.3% were female. Similarly, males were a bit higher than female students in respect to the use of the internet to update knowledge and to access information for entrepreneurship/employment.

It is clear from the above table that there was no significant difference between the gender

of the respondents and the different purposes for which they used the internet. It can be statistically justified as the P-value (.4679) is higher than the significance level (0.10) at 6 degrees of freedom. Thus, it calls for the acceptance of the null hypothesis.

7. Gender-wise browsing of E-sources by the respondents: Table-4 indicates the association between gender and use of e-sources by the Post Graduate students.

Table 4 : Gender-wise browsing of different e-sources

n=378

E-information -sources	Gender				Total
	Male		Female		
	f	%	f	%	
E-periodicals (journals & magazines)	79	46.5	91	53.5	170
E-books	108	52.7	97	47.3	205
Digital library	67	53.6	58	46.4	125
E-newspaper	89	52.3	81	47.7	170
E-thesis	77	48.1	83	51.9	160
Website resources	164	51.4	156	48.6	320
Online-database	71	51.4	67	48.6	138
Other information sources	43	53.7	37	46.3	80

X^2 value = 2.880, df= 7, The P-Value is .895. *Not significant*

Table- 4 indicate that, out of 205 students who browse e-books , the proportion of usage among male (52.7%) and female (47.3%) respondents was more or less the same. As far as accessing e-periodicals by the respondents (n=170), more than 50 per cent of the sample population were female (53.5%). Among the respondents using e-thesis, 51.9 per cent were female and 48.1 per cent were male. Among the total number of students (n=125) students assessing the digital library, 53.6 per cent were male and 46.4 per cent were female. A similar trend was found regarding the use of online databases and website resources, which were used by male and female students, similarly. Khan and Nisha (2017) revealed that online journals are

more commonly used by female students than their male counterparts, whereas the utilisation of websites among both female and male students is similar.

Results found that there is no considerable variation between gender and the various information resources browsed on the internet by the respondents. It can be statistically proved as the P-value (.895) is greater than the level of significance (0.01) at 7 degree of freedom. Thus, it calls for the acceptance of the null hypothesis.

When the Chi-square test is applied to examine the association between the gender of the respondents and information sources browsed on the internet, it is found that there is no considerable association between the

compared aspects. Thus, it calls for the acceptance of the null hypothesis. Further, when the Pearson's r test is applied to see the level of association, it is found that gender is not associated with various information resources browsed on the internet by the

respondents at a 0.10 significance level.

8. Gender-wise extent of E-resources usage: Figure-4 shows the relation between extent of e-resources usage and gender of the respondents.

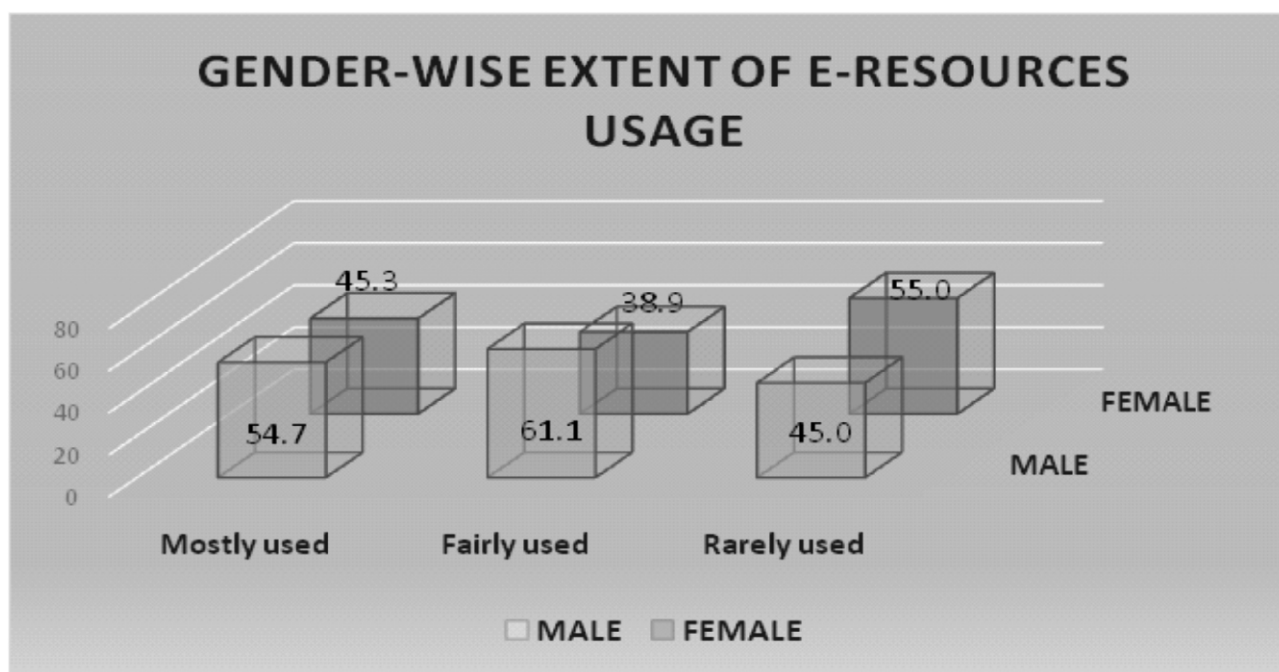


Figure-4: Gender-wise extent of e-resources usage

χ^2 value = 3.264, df = 2, The P-Value is .1954. Notsignificant at $p < .10$.

Figure- 4 presents that, among the total number of students ($n=225$) who mostly used E-resources for various information, most of them were male students (54.7%). Similarly, out of 113 respondents (who used e-resources, fairly), 61.1 per cent were male and 38.9 per cent were female. More than fifty per cent of respondents who rarely used e-resources for seeking various types of information were female (55.0%). The findings are similar with the findings of Khan and Nisha (2017).

A Chi-square test is applied to test the association between the extent of E-resources used and the gender of

respondents, which reveals that there is no significant variation between the gender of the respondents and the extent of their use of e-resources. It can be statistically justified as the P-value (.1954) is greater than the significance level (0.10) at 2 degrees of freedom. Thus, it calls for the acceptance of the null hypothesis.

CONCLUSION

The act of actively seeking information in order to meet an information need is known as information-seeking behaviour. This is influenced by the person seeking

information's personal, emotional, educational, and demographic characteristics. Several research have identified gender as a possible influencing factor in information seeking behaviour. Gender influenced the frequency of library usage, the goal of seeking information, the information sources consulted, and the purposes of library use, according to the study's findings. While not significantly related to the amount of time students spend in the library, internet usage for specific purposes, browsing of various e-resources, and the level of internet usage.

The findings could have implications for psychological research and practise, particularly in the areas of educational institutions, library science, cognitive development, and training and performance evaluation. As a result, in order to effectively help university students in their information-seeking procedures, it is vital to explore gender-specific disparities in their information-seeking behaviours.

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