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Influence of Study Stream on the Students' Information-Seeking Behaviour

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ABSTRACT

The study was conducted to find out the association between information-seeking behaviour and the stream of study (faculty) of postgraduate students. The study used a structured online questionnaire to collect the data during 2022. From a sample of 378 postgraduate students chosen at random from eight faculties (Arts, Science, Engineering &Technology, Law, Commerce, Education, Fine Arts and Social Science) at the University of Rajasthan, Jaipur. The findings revealed a significant association between the respondents' stream of study (faculty) and their purpose of seeking information, frequency of using the library, the purposes of use of the library, time spent in the library, purpose-wise usage of the internet, information sources used, browsing of different e-resources, and extent of use of e-resources. All selected aspects were found to be affected by the stream of study of the students. This research can be utilized to better understand the psychology of students seeking knowledge. This research may also aid in improving the university's information delivery system based on students' information-seeking behaviour.

INTRODUCTION

The new paradigm of the information age is emerging at a faster pace, where information is one of the assets required and used by human beings for their upliftment and prosperity. Seeking information is a natural phenomenon and every person requires information in order to complete a task or to fill a gap in their knowledge. Information seeking is the process of obtaining information from various information sources, like electronic, informal and formal sources etc. it is the method by which people search information and utilize it to fulfill their need of information. The manner in which people seek information varies. The emotional, personal, educational, and demographic variables of the person seeking information influence his or her information-seeking behaviour (Nain et al., 2015). Even for marketing of farm produce information sources including personal localite as well as cosmopolite sources act as the major information providers to followed by electronic media, print media and traditional media (Raina et al., 2011). Maamiry (2017) undertook a study on the information-seeking behaviour of students of the University of Dubai. The study focused that students' pattern of information seeking depends mainly on the culture and information-searching skills of students. Khan & Nisa (2017) also reported that gender has significant association with the information seeking behavior of students. Students' information-seeking behaviour has also varied due to their unique characteristics and needs. Students are also varied in their information-seeking behaviour due to their different kinds of needs and attributes. Information seeking behaviour of students affected by the various factors like discipline/stream of study, mode of admission (regular or private), available resources, information need of students and personal characteristics etc. Ozowa & Aba (2017) carried out a study entitled "Perceived personality traits and information-seeking behaviour of postgraduate students in universities in Benue State, Nigeria". The study found that personality traits such as conscientiousness, extroversion, neuroticism, openness to experience, and agreeableness are significantly correlated positively with the information-seeking

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behaviour of postgraduate students. Barret (2005) research shows that 80 per cent of social science students approach current issued journals. For academic assignments, search engines are often utilized. Students who are seeking information for jobs seem to approach library more. It shows that information seeking behavior is affected by the various factors. As well as stream of study impact a lot on students' future goals and life style, therefore this study was conducted to assess the effect of stream of study (faculty) on the information seeking behavior of post graduate students.

METHODOLOGY

The current study was undertaken at the University of Rajasthan, Jaipur. In Rajasthan, this university is the oldest and largest university in terms of students' strength and territory area. Post-graduate students enrolled in various faculties namely Arts, Science, Engineering and Technology, Law, Commerce, Education, Fine Arts and Social Science were participants of this study for the 2019-2020 academic year. Sample size was determined with help of Yamane (1967) formula ($n = N/1+N (e)^2$). Sampling (selection of sample) was done in 3 stages i.e. Selection of the university (I^{st} stage), Selection of the faculties (2^{nd} stage) and selection of sample (3^{rd} stage). Lottery method was applied to take students in final sample. Among the 9 faculties of the university, eight faculties were selected through a purposive sampling method. And A simple random sampling (lottery) procedure was used to include students from all of the selected faculties in the final sample. To ensure equal involvement of both male and female students from each faculty in the sample, two separate lists were prepared (one for male students, the other for female students). Afterwards, the random sampling technique (lottery method) was applied to include the students in the sample. A self-developed questionnaire was used to collect data for the study. Validity and Reliability of the tool was also tested before the administration of tool. The reliability coefficient for the structured questionnaire was 0.85. Thus, the tool was found to be highly reliable. Out of total 478 questionnaires were sent by mail and what's-app to randomly selected 478 students. There were 378 questionnaires were returned with response (81.46%). Information seeking behaviour was taken as dependent variables and stream of study (Faculty) was taken as independent variables. Hypothesis were formulated in null form. Chi-square test was used for establishment of association between dependent and independent variables in the present study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Stream of study (faculty) and purpose-based information seeking

Table 1 shows the association between faculty and the purpose for which respondents seek information. According to Table 1, the majority of the 250 respondents seeking information for routine academic information needs are from the Sciences (35.6%) followed by Humanities (33.6%), and Social Science (30.8%) faculties. Humanities account for 39.0 percent of the 230 respondents looking for career advice and employment information and Science faculty account for 36.5% and Social Sciences (24.5%). The majority of respondents seeking library-related information and social security benefits were Social Science faculty members. Thus, the above table shows that there are differences in the faculties of the respondents in terms of their various purposes for seeking information. At 16 degrees of freedom, the p-value (.001605) is statistically justified to be less than the significance level (0.01). Therefore, the formulated null hypothesis must not be accepted. As per results it is concluded that there is a link between the respondents' faculties and the purpose of seeking information.

Stream of study-wise information sources

The humanities faculty (Figure 1) has the highest percentage of library users (38.8%), it is followed by science faculty (31.1%) and Social Science (30.1%) faculty. While faculty (teaching staff) and Informal resources (family and friends) are consulted more by science faculty as compare to humanities and Social Science faculty. Further research shows that students consulted with the administration, with a higher percentage of them coming from the humanities (33.9%), social sciences (46.1%), and sciences (27.7%). Nearly the same percentages of respondents from the Humanities (30.7%) and Science faculty (29.8%) indicated that the Internet was their primary information source (39.5% each). Findings show that the P-value (.0016297) is less than the significance threshold of 0.01 at 8 degrees of freedom. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated statistically that the students' choice of information sources was influenced by their course of study. The results are in line with those of Fasola & Olabode (2014); Marila's (2013); Tafti & Tarverdezade (2010), & Owolabi et al., (2010), who also found that students' information-seeking behaviour is influenced by their course of study and educational level.

Table 1. Influence of stream of study on purpose-wise seeking Information

Purpose of Information seeking	Stream of Study			Average percentage/
	Social Science (%)	Humanities (%)	Science (%)	(Total respondents)
Career counseling and employment	24.5	39.0	36.5	60.8/ (230)
Library related	45.6	28.2	26.2	27.2 / (103)
Routine academic information needs	30.8	33.6	35.6	66.1/ (250)
Students' union election	24.9	31.1	44.0	51.1/ (193)
Associated curricular activities	28.4	34.7	36.9	50.2/ (190)
Co-curricular activities	44.6	32.7	22.7	29.1/ (110)
Research work	32.8	28.5	38.7	49.2/ (186)
Competency development	30.3	37.5	32. 2	54.2/ (205)
Social security benefits	35.9	33.4	30.7	40.5/ (153)

X^2 = 37.8199; df = 16; P-value = <.001605; Significant at p<.01

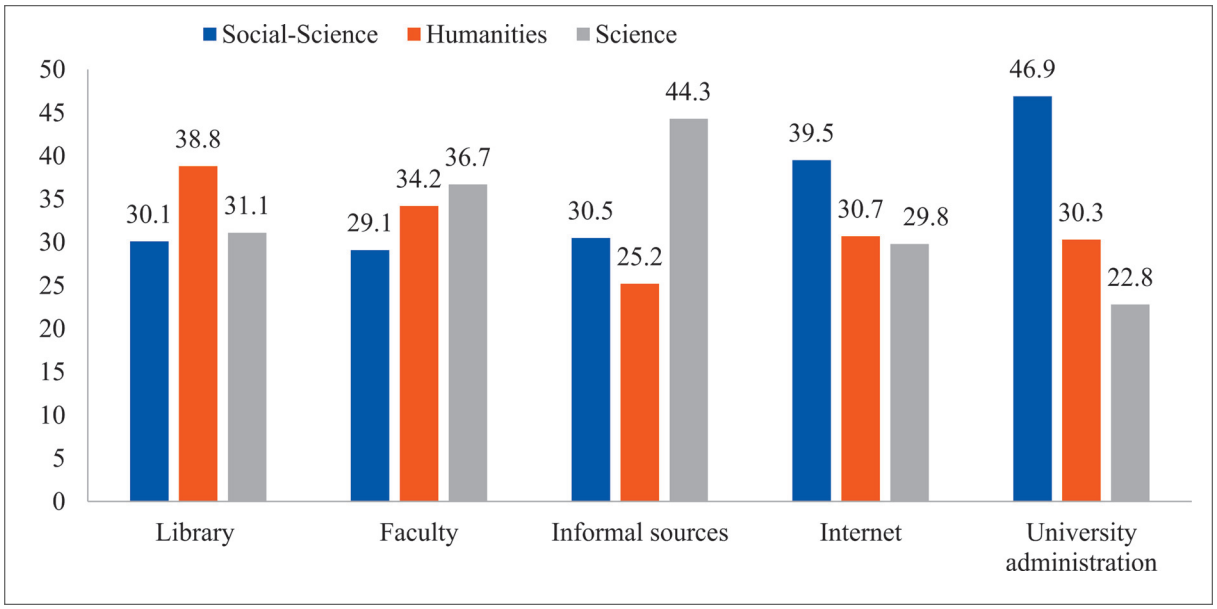

Figure 1. Influence of stream of study on information sources consulted
X^2 = 24.8788; df = 8; P-value = <.001629; Significant at p<.01

Stream of study wise usage of library

Figure 2 shows the association of stream of study and usages of library by the respondents. The humanities (42.9%) are the most likely to use the library on a daily basis, followed by Science (32.3%).The majority of those who used the library every alternative day were from the Science faculty (40.74%). The library was used once a week by 45.78 per cent of Social Sciences students, 31.3 per cent of Humanities students, and 22.8 per cent of science students. Similarly, a good number of students (66.2%) in the Social Sciences faculty visited the library once every 15 days. In the monthly visit category, similar numbers of respondents from all three faculties were found, whereas the higher number of students (58.5%) belongs to the faculty of Social Science who visited the library occasionally. According to the data gathered, students of Humanities stream use the library more than students of Science and Social Science stream. Furthermore, results show that a vast number of students from the Humanities field use the library daily. It is statistically proved that the P-value (0.00029) at 10 degrees of freedom is less than 0.01 level of significance (Figure 2). Thus, findings show that null hypothesis must be rejected. The frequency of library use found to be influenced by the respondents' academic field. According to Urquhart and Rowley's (2007) research, the students' behaviour has an impact on how frequently they utilise the library.

Stream of study wise purposes of use of the library

Higher number of students who use library for the purpose of borrowing books belongs to Humanities (39.9%). The students who used the libraries to see reference materials belonged to Humanities (44.6%). Maximum number of students were from Humanities (39.2%) faculty who visit the library to access periodicals (Table 2). Furthermore, results presented that Social Science students accessed online resources more than faculty of Science and Humanities. Humanities students account for 34.8 per cent of those who visit the library for study purposes, followed by Science students (33.2%), and Social Science students (32.1%). It also, demonstrates a strong correlation between the library's and the study stream intended usage.

Stream of study and the purpose-wise usage of internet

According to data showing in Table 3, the majority of 220 students were from Humanities (39.6%), who use the internet for

Table 2. Influence of Stream of study on purposes of use of the library

Purpose of information seeking	Stream of the study			Average percentage/
	Social Sciences (%)	Humanities (%)	Science (%)	(Total respondents)
Access periodicals	31.3	39.2	29.5	60.0/ (227)
Access reference resource	24.7	44.6	30.7	70.6/ (267)
Borrowing books	29.5	39.9	30.6	76.2/ (288)
Reprography service	35.2	20.7	44.1	38.4/ (145)
Access thesis and project reports	31.9	25.9	42.2	52.1/ (197)
Study purpose only	33.2	34.7	32.1	68.5/ (259)
Access e-resource	39.0	25.8	35.2	27.8/ (105)

X^2 = 46.3475; df = 14; P-value = .00024; Significant at p<.01

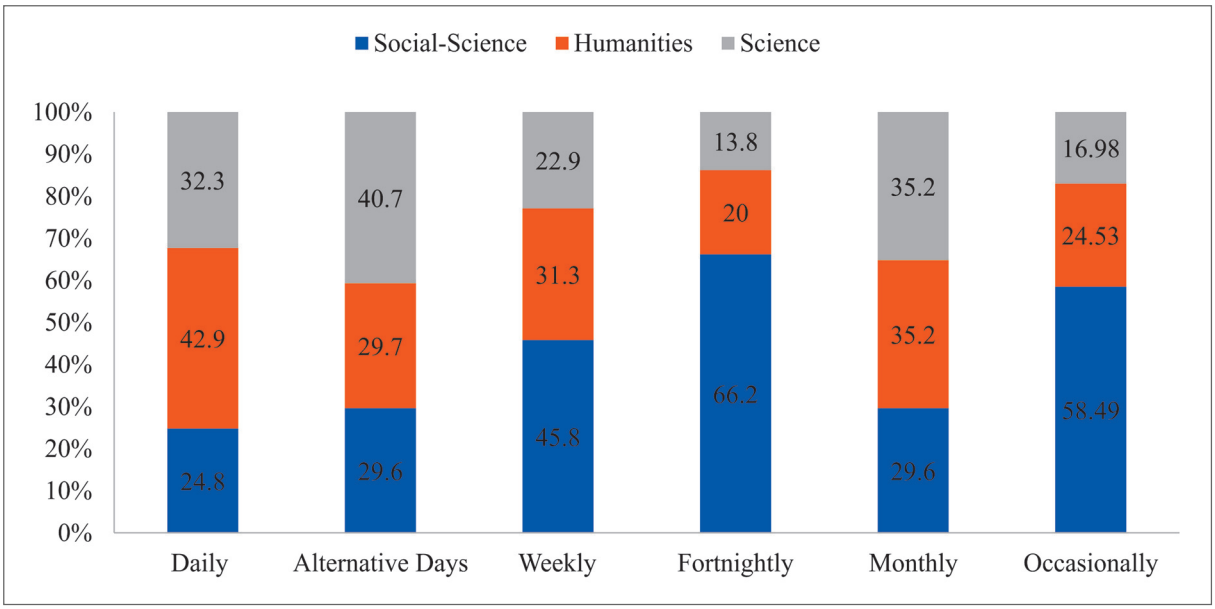

Figure 2. Influence of stream of study on usage of library
X^2 = 32.75, df = 10; P-value = .0003; Significant at p<.01

Table 3. Influence of stream of study on the purpose-wise usage of internet

Purpose of Information seeking	Stream of the study			AveragePercentage/
	Social Sciences (%)	Humanities (%)	Science (%)	(Total no. of respondents)
Literature search	33.2	41.1	25.7	74.0/ (280)
Reading	22.7	39.6	37.7	58.2/ (220)
Research purpose	36.8	28.6	34.6	62.0/ (234)
Database search	31.2	28.8	40.0	45.0/ (170)
To update knowledge	23.9	41.1	35.00	68.8/ (260)
Means of communication	39.4	32.4	28.2	45.0/ (170)

X^2 = 39.325; df = 12; P-value = .00009; Significant at p<.01

reading purpose and it is closely follow by Science (37.7%). Higher number of students are also from Humanities, who were using the internet for literature searches (41.1%) and to update their knowledge (41.2%). However, the percentage of respondents who use the internet for research purposes and uses as a means of communication is dominated by Social science faculty. Findings presents that at 12 degrees of freedom, the P-value (.00009) is less than0.01 level of the significant. It can be concluded that faculty affects the respondents' various purposes for using the internet. According to Pinto et al., (2014), academic faculty of study has the greatest influence on students' internet information-seeking patterns. Dhanwal et al., (2022) highlighted that students keep themselves updated with latest know and how through the television, mobile phones and with internet connections. Study stated that internet use was positively correlated with the stream of study of the students.

Faculty-wise browsing of e-sources

Table 4 depicts that almost similar number of respondents from all selected streams browsed the internet for E-books. The majority of respondents who use e-journals are from Science stream (44.7%). The majority of students, however, are from the Social Science stream, use the Internet to assess various E-theses. A good number of students were from the humanities faculty (41.2%), who use the internet for reading electronic newspapers. Data from postgraduate students assessing website resources show that the majority of students (38.1%) were from the Social Sciences stream. Findings depict that this stream of study affects the information seeking behavior (assessing electronic resources) of postgraduate students. According to statistics, the p-value at 14 degrees of freedom (.00227) is below the significance level (0.05). in order for the null hypothesis to be rejected. It demonstrates that there is a relationship between the variables under comparison. Consequently, it can be said that this area of research is related to the many online information sources that the respondents looked up. According to statistics, the level of significance is below the p-value (.00227) at 14 degrees of freedom (0.05). in order for the null hypothesis to be rejected. It demonstrates a relationship between the variables under comparison. As a result, that the respondents' internet for material related to their field of study. Nain et al., (2019) opined that WhatsApp is a possible means of socialization and internalization, facilitated the creation of social wealth in the form of discussion groups for innovative farmers for learning exchange. Singh et al., (2021) found that majority of the young farmers preferred internet based sources viz. social media, as a source of agricultural information. They are

Table 4. Influence of stream of study on browsing of different E-sources

E-information sources	Science (%)	Humanities (%)	Social-Science (%)	Average percentage/ (Total no. of respondents)
e-periodicals	44.7	35.9	19.4	45.0/ (170)
e-Books	33.7	34.6	31.7	54.2/ (205)
Digital library	36.0	33.6	30.4	33.0/ (125)
e-newspaper	35.9	41.2	22.9	45.0/ (170)
e-thesis	34.4	27.5	38.1	160/ (160)
Website resources	27.5	34.4	38.1	42.3/ (320)
Online database	35.5	34.1	30.4	36.5/ (138)
Other information sources	32.5	37.5	30.0	21.1/ (80)

Note: significance at $p < .01$.

using these sources to share and receive information on agriculture and allied fields. Mobile applications (e-source) are used by farmers to a great extent as a vital information resource regarding improved agricultural technologies (Jayalakshmi, 2022).

CONCLUSION

The study found that the students' stream of study influenced all selected factors such as the purpose of seeking information, frequency of using the library, time spent in the library, internet usage, browsing of different e-resources, and extent of use of e-resources etc. This study is helpful for policymakers and university administrators to gain insight into the behaviour and psychology of postgraduate students who seek information for study purposes as well as about their other activities and various tasks. Hence, Libraries and need to develop need-based accessible information delivery system for the students.

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