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Awareness And Use of e-Resources among Research Scholars of Social Science Faculties in Selected Universities of Bihar: A Survey

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The increasing use of electronic resources (e-resources) has transformed the landscape of academic research and knowledge dissemination and it has become necessary for library professionals to study its utility. The aim of this study is to examine the awareness and usage of e-resources among research scholars in the Faculty of Social Sciences in universities of the state of Bihar. **Methodology:** This study employed a mixed-methods approach, consisting of a survey and semi-structured interviews, to collect data from a sample of 110 research scholars from various social science disciplines across five government universities in the state of Bihar. **Findings:** The findings indicate that the level of awareness about e-resources among research scholars is very high, and most respondents regularly use these resources for their research work. However, the study also highlights the need for better access, training and institutional support to further improve the effective use of e-resources. The findings reveal a significant correlation between awareness levels and the effective use of e-resources, highlighting the need for improved training and access. **Originality:** This is the first research of its kind on the use and awareness of e-resources by research scholars of the Faculty of Social Sciences of universities in Bihar. These results provide valuable insights for academic institutions in Bihar to develop targeted strategies and policies that promote the integration of e-resources in the research and academic activities of their stakeholders.

Introduction:

The advent of digital technology has transformed the landscape of academic research, particularly in the social sciences. E-resources, including online journals, databases, e-books, Electronic Thesis and Dissertations (ETDs), and digital archives, provide researchers with unprecedented access to information. This study focuses on the awareness and

usage of these resources among research scholars in Bihar's social science faculties, aiming to enhance their research capabilities. The increasing use of electronic resources has profoundly changed the landscape of academic research and knowledge dissemination. The advent of electronic resources such as e-journals, e-books, databases and institutional repositories has revolutionised the way researchers access, consume and use information. These electronic resources

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have become an integral part of the researchers' workflow, facilitating access to a vast and ever-growing repository of knowledge (Tenopir, 2003). Awareness and effective use of e-resources among academic and research scholars is of great importance. Research scholars, as the backbone of the academic community, play a pivotal role in driving the advancement of knowledge and innovation. Understanding their patterns of e-resource usage and the factors that influence their adoption can inform the development of targeted strategies and policies to optimize the utilization of these resources (Deng, 2010).

The state of Bihar, is home to a diverse landscape of higher education institutions, including several government universities. The Faculty of Social Sciences at these universities is a thriving hub for research scholars spanning various disciplines, including economics, political science, sociology, and psychology. Investigating the use and awareness of e-resources within this academic context can provide valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities associated with the integration of digital resources in the social sciences.

This paper investigates the awareness and usage of electronic resources (e-resources) among research scholars in the Faculty of Social Science at selected universities in Bihar, India. Recognizing the importance of digital tools in modern research, the study aims to identify the factors influencing e-resource utilization and the challenges faced by scholars. A mixed-method approach was employed, combining surveys and interviews to gather comprehensive data. The findings reveal a significant correlation between awareness levels and the effective use of e-resources, highlighting the need for improved training and access.

Literature Review

Sharma (2021) emphasizes that awareness and training are critical factors influencing the effective use of e-resources among scholars. Similarly, according to Kumar and Singh (2020), the integration of digital tools in research processes significantly enhances the quality and scope of studies. The evolution of e-resources is ongoing, and their role in social science research will likely continue to expand. As new technologies emerge, researchers must adapt their practices to leverage these tools effectively. Collaborative platforms and open-access initiatives may further enhance the accessibility and utility of e-resources, promoting inclusivity within the academic community (Bhardwaj, 2020).

Jubb (2019) emphasizes that researchers must navigate a vast amount of information and discern credible sources from unreliable ones. This necessity highlights the importance of training and support for scholars, particularly

those new to the research process. Training programs focused on information literacy can empower researchers to make the most of available e-resources. As noted by Kaur and Kaur (2018), the ease of access to a vast array of scholarly articles enables researchers to conduct more comprehensive literature reviews, which in turn enhances the rigor of their studies. The ability to access current and relevant research is crucial for developing well-informed hypotheses and methodologies.

Bhatia and Sharma (2017) highlighted that eBooks are increasingly being favored due to their portability and ease of access, particularly among graduate students. According to a study by Mseleku (2017), researchers often experience difficulty filtering through the sheer volume of information available online, which can lead to decision fatigue and hinder research progress. Furthermore, disparities in access to technology, particularly in developing regions, can limit the ability of some scholars to fully engage with e-resources (Cloete, 2017).

Raju and Pillai (2014) conducted a study indicating that online databases, such as JSTOR and ProQuest, are the most frequently used e-resources among social science researchers, primarily due to their comprehensive search capabilities. E-resources, including online journals, databases, and eBooks, have become essential tools for social science scholars.

According to Tenopir et al. (2013), the transition from print to electronic formats has significantly enhanced access to scholarly literature, enabling researchers to find relevant studies more efficiently. Sinha, Singha and Sinha (2011) emphasizes that the use of the Internet and electronic resources has had a great impact on the users of the Assam University Central Library in their research and development work. Also the rapid development in information communication technology has facilitated the convergence of new electronic tools and formats.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to explore the use and awareness of e-resources among research scholars in the Faculty of Social Sciences at universities across the state of Bihar. Specifically, the research objectives are:

1. To assess the level of awareness and usage of e-resources among research scholars in the Faculty of Social Sciences at universities in Bihar;
2. To identify the factors that influence the adoption and utilization of e-resources by research scholars;
3. To examine the barriers and challenges faced by research

scholars in accessing and utilizing e-resources;

4. To provide recommendations for enhancing the effective use of e-resources within the academic community.

By addressing these objectives, the study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the use and awareness of e-resources in the academic context, with a particular focus on the social sciences in the state of Bihar. The findings can inform the development of targeted strategies and policies to promote the integration of e-resources into the research and scholarly activities of the Faculty of Social Sciences at universities in Bihar.

Scope of the Study

There are a total of 11 government general universities in Bihar state. These four universities have been selected for the study out of a total of 11 General State Government Universities in Bihar.

1. Patna University (PU), Patna, Bihar (1917);
2. Bhim Rao Ambedkar Bihar University (BRABU), Muzaffarpur, Bihar (1952);
3. Lalit Narayan Mithila University (LNMU), Darbhanga, Bihar (1972);
4. Tilka Manjhi Bhagalpur University (TMBU), Bhagalpur, Bihar (1960);

Research Methodology and Design

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques, to investigate the use and awareness of e-resources among research scholars in the Faculty of Social Sciences at universities across the state of Bihar, India.

Quantitative Survey

A structured questionnaire was developed to collect quantitative data from the research scholars. The questionnaire was designed to gather information on the following aspects:

1. Demographic and academic profile of the respondents;
2. Awareness and use of various e-resources;
3. Factors influencing the adoption and utilization of e-resources; and

4. Barriers and challenges faced in accessing and using e-resources.

The questionnaire was distributed among 120 research scholars of the Faculty of Social Sciences of selected four universities of Bihar, who were selected using random sampling technique.

Qualitative Interviews

To complement the quantitative data, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of 30 research scholars, selected using a purposive sampling method. The interviews aimed to gain in-depth insights into the participants' experiences, perceptions, and perspectives on the use and awareness of e-resources. The interview guide covered topics such as:

1. Patterns of e-resource usage and the factors influencing their adoption
2. Perceived benefits and challenges associated with the use of e-resources
3. Suggestions for improving the accessibility and integration of e-resources

The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key themes and patterns emerging from the qualitative data.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The quantitative data collected through the survey were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and mean scores. The qualitative data from the interviews were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach, where the transcripts were carefully reviewed, and recurring themes and patterns were identified.

Demographic and Academic Profile of the Respondents

Demographic Profile (Gender & Age-wise Response)

The study sample consisted of 120 research scholars from the Faculty of Social Sciences at universities in Bihar. Out of these, 107 people (91.67%) completed the questionnaire and returned it. 65.5% of the respondents were males and 34.5% were females as shown in Table No. 1. Most of the respondents were research scholars in the age group of 26 to 30 years.

Table 1: Demographic Profile (Gender & Age-wise Response) (N=110)

University	Gender			Age Group			
	Male	Female	Total	21-25	26-30	31-35	36-45
Patna University, Patna (PU)	17	10	27	4	11	10	2
Bhim Rao Ambedkar Bihar University, Muzaffarpur (BRABU)	19	09	28	5	12	7	4
Lalit Narayan Mithila University, Darbhanga (LNMU)	18	11	29	4	13	8	4
Tilka Manjhi Bhagalpur University, Bhagalpur (TMBU)	18	08	26	5	11	7	3
Total	72	38	110	18	47	32	13

Demographic Profile (Subject & University-wise Response)

Table 2 finds that the respondents represented a diverse

range of social science disciplines, including Political science (23.6%), History (21.8%), Economics (16.36%), Sociology (15.45%), Geography (12.73%) and Psychology (10%).

Table 2: Demographic Profile (Subject & University-wise Response) (N=110)

Subject	Gender wise			University Wise			
	Male	Female	Total	PU	BRABU	LNMU	TMBU
Political Science	16	8	26	6	7	7	6
History	14	10	24	6	6	7	5
Economics	14	4	18	4	5	4	5
Sociology	10	7	17	3	4	6	4
Geography	10	4	14	5	3	3	3
Psychology	6	5	11	3	3	2	3
Total	72	38	110	27	28	29	26

Awareness of E-Resources

Awareness and Use of E-Resources

As is evident from Table 3, most of the respondents were aware of e-journals and e-books (76%), but only 37% were aware of scholarly databases and repositories and only 44% were aware of open educational resources, while only 23% were aware of research collaboration and networking tools.

Table 3: Awareness of E-Resources (N=110 for each item)

Awareness about...	Percent (%)
e-Journals and e-Books	76 %
Scholarly Databases and Repositories	37 %
Open Educational Resources (OER)	44 %
Research Collaboration and Networking Tools	23%

(Multimale responses permitted)

Awareness of major Databases and Repository

Table 4 shows that majority of the respondents were not aware of the major databases and repositories, only 33% were aware of JSTOR, only 23% were aware of Science Direct, only

32% were aware of ProQuest, only 32% were aware of Google Scholar, 24% were aware of SSRN and only 13% were aware of OpenDOAR.

Table 4: Awareness of the major Databases and Repository (N=110 for each item)

Awareness about...	Percent (%)
JSTOR	33 %
ScienceDirect	23 %
ProQuest	32 %
Google Scholar	66 %
SSRN (Social Science Research Network)	24%
OpenDOAR (Directory of Open Access Repositories)	13%

(Multimale responses permitted)

Awareness of Electronic

Thesis or Dissertation (ETD)

Table 5 shows that most of the respondents were not aware of major Indian Electronic Thesis or Dissertation databases and repositories, only 37% were aware of Sodhganga, only 12% were aware of vidyanidhi, only 27% were aware of ShodhGangotri.

Table 5: Awareness of Electronic Thesis or Dissertation (ETD) (N=110 for each item)

Awareness about...	Percent (%)
Sodhganga	37 %
Vidyanidhi	12 %
ShodhGangotri	27 %

(Multimale responses permitted)

Awareness of Reference Management Tools

Table 6 shows that most of the respondents were aware of reference management tools, 62% of the respondents were aware of Zotero, 54% of the respondents were aware of Mendeley, 39% of the respondents were aware of EndNote and 37% of the respondents were aware of Refworks. These were the tools they had acquired during their PhD course work.

Table 6: Awareness of Reference Management Tools (N=110 for each item)

Awareness about...	Percent (%)
Zotero	62 %
Mendeley	54%
EndNote	39 %
Refwork	37%

(Multimale responses permitted)

Use of E-Resources

Priority in the use of e-Resources

Table 7 shows that in the use of electronic resources by research scholars, 23.83% users prefer e-book, 40.11% users prefer e-journal/e-magazine/newspapers, 21.51% users prefer e-thesis and e-dissertation, and 14.53% users prefer other types of e-resources. Thus, it is clear that the first choice for access to library material is e-journals. E-Journals are preferred by research scholars and faculty members but e-books are preferred by PG students.

Table 7: Priority in the use of e-Resources (N=110 for each item)

Priority in use of digital/internet resources	Percent (%)
e-books	13 %
e-Journals	47 %
e-Theses/ Dissertations	31 %
Databases and Repository	9 %

(Multimale responses permitted)

Reasons for giving priority to Electronic material over Printed material

Table number 8 show the reasons for giving preference to electronic resources over printed (traditional) documents. Most respondents consider Time-saving (34%) as the reason for giving priority, followed by Informative (31%), then Cost-effective (15%), Satisfaction (13%), and the least users consider Reliability (7%) as the reason.

Table 8: Reasons for giving priority to Electronic over Printed material (N=110 for each item)

Reasons for giving priority	Percent (%)
Reliability	9 %
Cost-Effective	15 %
Time Saving	34 %
Informative	31 %
Satisfaction	13 %

(Multimale responses permitted)

Priority in the use of ICT tools (Electronic devices) for research purpose

Table 9 show that in the use of information technology by research scholars for study or research purposes, 38% of research scholars prefer Laptops, 11% users prefer Desktops, 47% research scholars prefer Smart-Phones, and 4% research scholars prefer e-book Reader. Thus, it is clear that smartphones have now become the first choice for the use of information technology.

Table 9: Priority in use of ICT tools for Study Purpose (N=110 for each item)

Priority in use	Percent (%)
Laptops	38%
Desktops	11%
Smart-Phones	47%
e-Book Readers	4%

(Multimale responses permitted)

Problems faced by users while using electronic/ internet resources

Table 10 show that in the use of electronic resources by research scholars, 47% of the research scholars face the problem of copyright and license, only 8% of the research scholars face the problem of lack of ICT knowledge, 23% research scholars face the problem of retrieving too much information and 22% research scholars face issues of lack of e-resource retrieval skills. Thus, most of the research scholars face issues of lack of e-resource retrieval skills.

Table 10: Problems faced by users while using electronic/ internet resources (*N=110 for each item*)

Problems faced by users	Percent (%)
Copyright and licenses	47 %
Lack of ICT knowledge (Digital Devide)	8%
There is too much information retrieved	23%
Lack of e-resource retrieval skills	22%

(Multimale responses permitted)

Availability of Electronic Resources in University Libraries

Table 11 shows that 89% of library users are not satisfied with the collection of electronic resources available in university libraries, and only 11% of users are satisfied with the collection of electronic resources available in libraries.

Table 11: Availability of Electronic resources in university libraries (*N=110 for each item*)

Availability of Electronic/Internet resources	Percent (%)
It is adequate	11%
Not satisfactory	89%

Use of Reference management Tools

Table 12 shows that only 9% of research scholars use reference management tools while 91% use manual reference writing. Out of 9% research scholars, 6% use Zotero and 3% use Endnote reference management tools.

Table 12: Use of Reference management Tools (*N=110 for each item*)

Awareness about...	Percent (%)
Zotero	6%
Mendeley	3%
EndNote	0 %
Refwork	0 %
Manual	91

(Multimale responses permitted)

Important Findings

The findings of this study provide valuable information about the awareness and use of e-resources among research scholars in the Faculty of Social Sciences in universities in the state of Bihar, India. There is a high level of awareness and use of e-resources, especially e-journals and e-books. However, awareness of online databases, repositories, reference management tools is not as expected. There is also a wide variation in awareness and use of e-resources.

The study shows that research scholars in this academic community have embraced the digital transformation of scholarly communication but it is still not as expected.

Awareness and Usage of Electronic Resources

- **Awareness:** While a majority of respondents were aware of e-journals and e-books, awareness levels were lower for scholarly databases, repositories, open educational resources, and research collaboration tools.
- **Database and Repository Awareness:** Most respondents were unfamiliar with major databases and repositories like JSTOR, Science Direct, ProQuest, Google Scholar, SSRN, and OpenDOAR.
- **Indian Thesis/Dissertation Databases:** Awareness of Indian databases like Shodhganga and Vidyanidhi was also limited.
- **Reference Management Tools:** A significant portion of respondents were aware of reference management tools like Zotero, Mendeley, EndNote, and Refworks, primarily acquired during their PhD coursework.
- **Electronic Resource Preference:** E-journals/e-magazines/newspapers were the most preferred electronic resources, followed by e-books, e-theses/ e-dissertations, and other types.
- **Reasons for Preference:** Time-saving and informative content were the primary reasons for preferring electronic resources, followed by cost-effectiveness and satisfaction. User reliability was the least considered factor.

Information Technology and Electronic Resource Usage

- **Device Preferences:** Laptops were the most preferred device for research, followed by smartphones, desktops, and e-book readers.
- **Challenges in Using Electronic Resources:** Copyright and licensing issues were the most significant challenges faced by research scholars, followed by lack of ICT knowledge, information

overload, and e-resource retrieval skills.

Satisfaction with Electronic Resource Collections

- **Dissatisfaction:** A large majority of library users (89%) were dissatisfied with the collection of electronic resources available in university libraries.
- **Manual Reference Writing:** Only 9% of research scholars used reference management tools, with the majority (91%) still using manual reference writing.

The study highlights the need for increased awareness and training on the use of electronic resources among research scholars. It also emphasizes the importance of addressing copyright and licensing issues, improving access to electronic resources, and providing adequate support for using information technology and reference management tools.

Discussion and Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the use and awareness of e-resources among the research scholars in the Faculty of Social Sciences at universities in Bihar:

- University libraries should strive to expand the range of e-resources available to research scholars by increasing the number of institutional subscriptions to relevant databases and journals. Additionally, universities should explore alternative access models such as open-access repositories and resource-sharing initiatives to provide wider access to e-resources.
- Universities should invest in improving IT infrastructure, including reliable Internet connectivity and availability of computer terminals, to facilitate seamless access and use of e-resources. In addition, technical support can help research scholars overcome issues related to the use of digital resources.
- Universities should develop and implement comprehensive training programs to enhance the skills of research scholars in finding, accessing, and using e-resources effectively. These programs should

be tailored to address the unique needs and challenges faced by scholars in various social science disciplines.

- Given the variation in use and awareness of e-resources across different social science disciplines, universities should consider adopting a more targeted approach. This may include the development of discipline-specific strategies and the identification of subject-specific e-resources to better meet the diverse research needs of the academic community.
- Universities should formulate and implement clear institutional policies and strategies that promote the use of e-resources among research scholars. These policies should address issues such as access, training and integration of e-resources into the overall research and scholarly activities of the academic community.
- The universities should explore opportunities for collaborative initiatives with other academic institutions, libraries, and research organizations within Bihar and beyond to share resources, best practices, and expertise in the effective utilization of e-resources. Such collaborations can help to leverage the collective knowledge and resources available within the broader academic ecosystem.

Conclusion

The study on awareness and use of e-resources among research scholars in the Faculty of Social Sciences in universities of the state of Bihar, India, provides valuable insights into the digital transformation of scholarly communication. The findings reveal a high level of awareness and regular use of e-resources, particularly e-journals and online databases, among research scholars. However, the study also reveals that there is a wide gap in the level of awareness and effective use of e-resources by research scholars in the Faculty of Social Sciences. Access and availability of e-resources, lack of adequate number of e-resources in university libraries, IT infrastructure and support, awareness and training, disciplinary differences and institutional policies and strategies, etc. are some of the factors influencing awareness and use of e-resources by research scholars in the Faculty of Social Sciences.

However, the study also highlights the need for continued efforts to address the challenges and barriers that hinder the effective utilization of these digital resources. The

key factors influencing the use and awareness of e-resources, such as access and availability, IT infrastructure and support, awareness and training, disciplinary differences, and institutional policies and strategies, should be the focus of targeted interventions. By implementing the recommended strategies, including improving access and availability, enhancing IT infrastructure and support, implementing targeted training and awareness programs, promoting disciplinary-specific approaches, formulating institutional policies and strategies, and fostering collaborative initiatives, the universities in Bihar can empower their research scholars to fully leverage the benefits of e-resources and enhance the overall quality.

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