
Information Needs and Seeking Behavior of Candidates preparing for Competitive Examinations: A Study

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Abstract

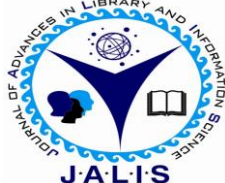
The main objective of this research paper is to know about the information needed of the candidates and the efforts they make in searching for the required information as part of the preparation for the competitive examinations. The study was conducted on candidates preparing for competitive examinations in Mahisagar district of Gujarat state. In which candidates preparing for competitive exams living in urban and rural areas of Mahisagar district were included in this study. As part of this study, based on various questions, it was found that the preferred sources of information for candidates preparing for competitive exams are mainly libraries, competitive exam preparation training classes, magazines, newspapers, reference books and other friends and advanced technologies like online training classes, social media. Searching for information related to a subject through a medium.

Keywords

Candidate, Competitive Examination, Information Need, Information Seeking Behavior

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Introduction

Today's age is more known as the information age than modern age. Information has become a prominent place in one's daily life. It is not wrong to say that information is the first need of human beings in today's time. Information is considered indispensable in all departments, from lifestyle to the latest development technologies. The use of this information has revolutionized the education sector and created employment opportunities in every sector. As part of preparation for competitive exams, youths can prepare for exams through various sources, get jobs, clear exams and develop themselves holistically. Youths can get jobs by giving this exam after passing their graduation or post graduation course.

Nowadays everyone gets education as part of the art of living. They want to get employment to earn their living after getting an education. As part of getting employment they apply themselves according to the qualifications of the posts released by the government or the education department. After the candidature, which according to the qualification of the post required degree and exam is organized to select the suitable candidate by them these exams are very tough. It is not easy to clear these exams. So to crack these competitive exams youths join various training institutes and classes through which they search for exam related information through various sources and use various sources to fulfill the requirements. The main objective of this study is to fulfill the needs and develop the youth preparing for competitive examinations through research disciplined training.

Background of the study

In terms of information need and information seeking behavior of candidates, this study is conducted on candidates preparing for competitive examinations in Mahisagar district of Gujarat state. Brief information about Mahisagar district of Gujarat state and key words is given below.

Gujarat state: Gujarat's name "Gujarat" is derived from the Sanskrit word Gurjar-Rashtra meaning Gurjar Rajya which means the land of Gurjars which originated from Mughal times. Gujarat is a prosperous state in western India. Gujarat is bordered by the Arabian Sea to the west, Rajasthan to the north, Madhya Pradesh to the east and Maharashtra to the south. Big rivers like Narmada, Tapi, Mahi, Sabarmati are flowing on the land of Gujarat. These

rivers have a great contribution in the prosperity of Gujarat. With mountains like Girnar, Pavagadh, Chotila, Shetrunjai, Gujarat looks beautiful. India has the longest coastline of 1600 km. Dharavatu state. Gujarat is the only home for the Asiatic lion. Gujarat is the safest state in India. Gujarat's crime rate which was 8.2 in 2002 is lower than any other state in India. Gujarat has seen an increase in the literacy rate and is 78.03 percent as per the latest census. Among them, male literacy is 85.75 percent while female literacy is 69.68 percent.

Mahisagar District: Mahisagar district was established by the then Chief Minister of Gujarat state Mrs. Anandiben Patel on 15th August, 2013, the Independence Day of India. Panchmahal district was divided and Lunawada, Khanpur, Kadana, Santrampur talukas were released from it and Balasinore talukas of Virpura of Kheda district were combined to form a new Mahisagar district of six talukas. Lunawada is the headquarters of Mahisagar district.

Candidate: A student, youth or a person who is appearing for an examination or who is preparing for a competitive examination to get a job is called a candidate.

Information needs: An individual's or group's desire to seek and obtain useful information.

Information seeking Behavior: The process of obtaining required information is called information acquisition behavior.

A study: A study generally means to engage in finding a solution to a problem or to conduct research on a topic or to critically analyze research.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the present study are derived as follows.

- ✓ To identify the information needs of students preparing for competitive examinations.
- ✓ To explain the information seeking behavior of students.
- ✓ To know the sources of information used by the students.
- ✓ To find out the barriers to students' access to information.

Review of Literature

Information is essential in today's times as it is a factor affecting the general life of people. People need information to get answers to specific questions related to a problem. So whenever individuals seek information, an information need arises and various efforts are made to satisfy the information need. According to Kalbande (2019) information is a cornerstone and modern civilization on which practically everything depends is primarily information. Everyone uses information in different forms according to their needs. (Silva and Chandravansh, 2016). Manjunath and Babu (2018) stated that progress of any nation is impossible unless information is made available to those who need it. According to him, policy makers, planners, economists, farmers, trainers, research scholars, doctors, engineers, librarians and others all demand information in their personal, professional and daily activities. In addition, Ikoja-Odongo & Mostert (2006) defined that general information needs were related to finding a research topic. Research-related literature reviews, reading journals, workshops using online research databases, seminar presentations, educational activities and life events that inspire. Tackie and Adams (2007) find that the literature on information needs and information seeking is different from everyday information seeking. According to them information influencers, such as accessibility, affordability and familiarity of the source used provide information.

Research Methods

In the present study a survey method was used and a self-constructed questionnaire was designed to answer specific questions. So that information can be collected by getting specific answers based on the objectives. For the present study the information has been obtained from the students preparing for the competitive examinations either face-to-face or indirectly through the medium of questionnaires. The data collected regarding the study is arranged in a tabular form in a categorical form for interpretation. In which the mathematical formulas are displayed in the form of tables and percentages. Tables in the present study are presented in MS. Presented with the help of Excel 2007. In the context of the present study, the questionnaire was created in Gujarati, the mother tongue of the students so that the students could understand more about the subject and give their valuable responses.

For this study, a total of 200 questionnaires were distributed to students preparing for competitive

examinations in Mahisagar district of Gujarat state. Out of which 180 questionnaires are returned, the percentage is 90%.

Research tools

In the present study a self-made structured questionnaire is used in terms of survey method.

Scope and Limitation

- ✓ The scope of the present study is limited to students preparing for competitive examinations of Mahisagar district - Gujarat.
- ✓ The present study is limited to students preparing for competitive exams only.
- ✓ Male and female students are included in this study.
- ✓ This study is limited to one area so the findings of this study cannot be applied to the whole state, all districts or state equivalent.

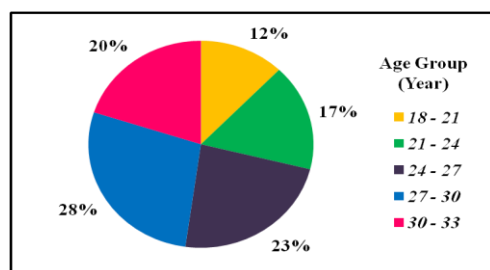
Data analysis

The information obtained during research in any subject can be vast and extensive. It is not possible or difficult to directly analyze the collected data. Classification and tabulation are ways to easily display large amounts of information. In addition to classification and tabulation, the collected data can also be displayed using graphs and charts or Graphs.

In the present study an attempt has been made to show the statistics in percentages while classifying and analyzing the available base material by the researcher.

Tables and Graphs – 1: Gender of candidates

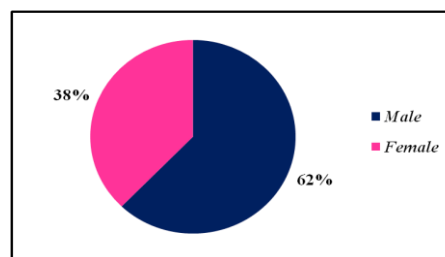
Sr. No.	Sex	Frequency	Percentage
1	Male	112	62.22 %
2	Female	68	37.78 %
Total		180	100 %



Interpreting the information found in the response to the question asked in question number 1, it appears that the number of male candidates was 112 i.e. 62.22 % while the number of women was 68 i.e. 37.78 % while preparing for the competitive examinations. Thus, based on the above statistics it can be said that the number of male candidates is more than female candidates while preparing for competitive exams.

Tables and Graphs – 2: age of candidates

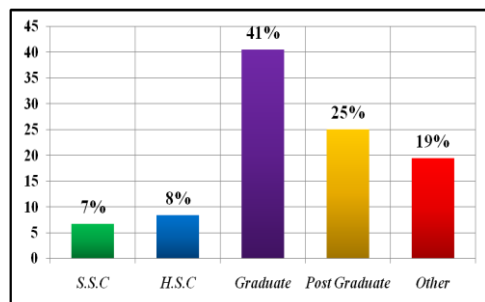
Sr. No.	Age Group (Years)	Frequency	Percentage
1	18 - 21	22	12.22 %
2	21 - 24	30	16.67 %
3	24 - 27	42	23.33 %
4	27 - 30	50	27.78 %
5	30 - 33	36	20.00 %
Total		180	100 %



Interpreting the information found in the response to the question asked in question number 2, it appears that the age groups of the candidates are 18 to 21, 21 to 24, 24 to 27, 27 to 30 and 30 to 33 respectively which are 22, 30, 42, 50 and 36 respectively. That is 12.22 %, 16.67 %, 23.33 %, 27.78 % and 20.00 % so based on the data it can be said that the maximum number of candidates belonging to the age group of 27 to 30 years are engaged in competitive exam preparations. While the candidates who belong to the minimum age group of 18 to 21 years are engaged in competitive exam preparations.

Tables and Graphs – 3: educational qualification of candidates

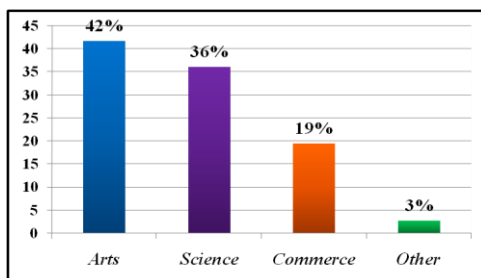
Sr. No.	Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
1	S.S.C	12	6.67 %
2	H.S.C	15	8.33 %
3	Graduate	73	40.56 %
4	Post Graduate	45	25.00 %
5	Other	35	19.44 %
Total		180	100 %



Interpreting the information found in the response to the question asked in question number 3, it appears that the most number of candidates with graduation educational qualification are involved in the preparation of competitive examinations, their number is 73 i.e. 40.56% while the least is the degree of S.S.C. Candidates who are joined which number is 12 i.e. 6.67 %, thus it can be said that graduate level candidates are seen preparing for competitive exams to avail most employment opportunities.

Tables and Graphs – 4: faculties of the candidates

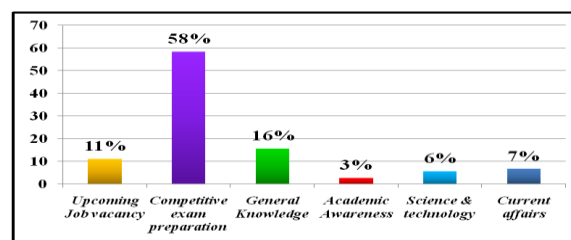
Sr. No.	faculty	Frequency	Percentage
1	Arts	75	41.67 %
2	Science	65	36.11 %
3	Commerce	35	19.44 %
4	Other	5	2.78 %
Total		180	100 %



Interpreting the information found in the response to the question asked in question number 4, it appears that the number of candidates from Arts stream is the highest 75 i.e. 41.67 %, the number of candidates from Science stream is 65 i.e. 36.11 %, the number of candidates from Commerce stream is 35 i.e. 19.44 % while the above mentioned The number of candidates from other disciplines is 05 i.e. 2.78 %. Hence it can be said that the maximum number of candidates from Arts and Science department are seen preparing for competitive exams.

Tables and Graphs – 5: objectives of candidates' information needs

Sr. No	Purposes of Information Requirement	Frequency	Percentage
1	Upcoming Job vacancy	20	11.11 %
2	Competitive exam preparation	105	58.33 %
3	General Knowledge	28	15.56 %
4	Academic Awareness	5	2.78 %
5	Science & technology	10	5.56 %
6	Current affairs	12	6.67 %
Total		180	100 %

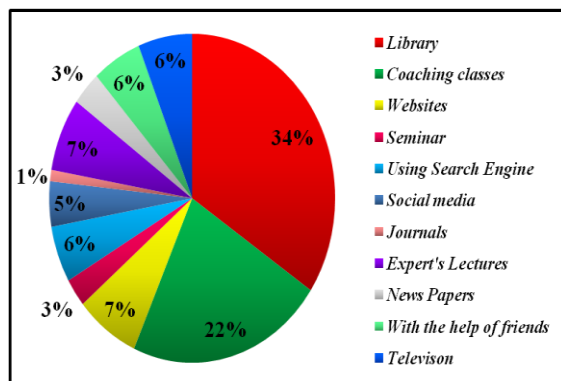


Interpreting the information found in the response to the question asked in question number 5, it appears that the maximum 105 i.e. 58.33 % candidates search for information as part of preparation for competitive examinations while 28 i.e. 15.56 % candidates' information requirement is for general knowledge. About 12% of candidates' information is to get information about upcoming job vacancies. Hence it can be said that almost all the candidates are indirectly getting information regarding the preparation of competitive exams.

Tables and Graphs – 6: medium through which candidates obtain information

Sr. No	A means of obtaining information	Frequency	Percentage
1	Library	62	34.44 %
2	Coaching classes	40	22.22 %
3	Websites	13	7.22 %
4	Seminar	5	2.78 %
5	Using Search Engine	10	5.56 %
6	Social media	8	4.44 %
7	Journals	2	1.11 %

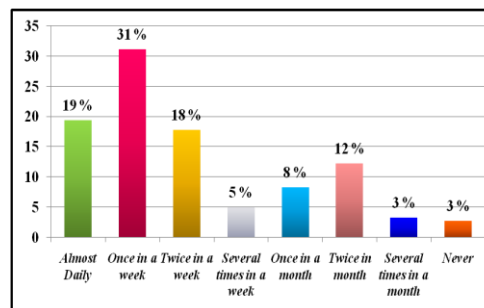
8	Expert's Lectures	13	7.22 %
9	Newspapers	6	3.33 %
10	With the help of friends	10	5.56 %
11	Television	11	6.11 %
	Total	180	100 %



Interpreting the information found in the response to the question asked in question number 6, it appears that maximum 62 i.e. 34.44 % candidates give more priority to library as a part of preparation for competitive exams while 40 i.e. 22.22 candidates give more priority to the preparation classes for exam preparation. Get information through reading. Many aspirants are seen preparing for the exam by getting information related to the exam from websites, expert speeches, TV and friends. Thus, it can be said that candidates give more importance to library and training classes than exam preparations.

Tables and Graphs – 7: information on library usage of candidates

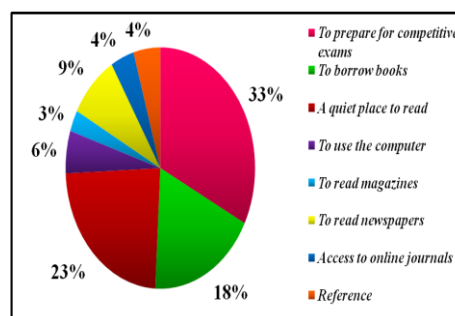
Sr. No	Library visit	Frequency	Percentage
1	Almost Daily	35	19.44%
2	Once in a week	56	31.11%
3	Twice in a week	32	17.78%
4	Several times in a week	9	5.00%
5	Once in a month	15	8.33%
6	Twice in month	22	12.22%
7	Several times in a month	6	3.33%
8	Never	5	2.78 %
	Total	180	100 %



Interpreting the information found in the response to the question asked in question number 7, it appears that maximum 56 i.e. 31.11 % candidates use the library once a week while the number of candidates who use it daily is 35 i.e. 19.44 %. The number of candidates visiting the library twice a week is 32 i.e. 17.78 %. The number of candidates using the library maximum twice in a month is 22 i.e. 12.22 %. 5 i.e. 2.78 % candidates are seen preparing for competitive exams without using the library. Hence it can be said that almost all candidates prefer the library for exam preparation.

Tables and Graphs – 8: candidates' purposes for library visits

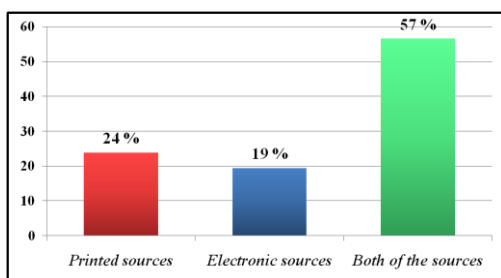
Sr. No	Purposes of library visit	Frequency	Percentage
1	To prepare for competitive exams	57	32.57 %
2	To borrow books	32	18.29 %
3	A quiet place to read	41	23.43 %
4	To use the computer	10	5.71 %
5	To read magazines	5	2.86%
6	To read newspapers	15	8.57%
7	Access to online journals	7	4.00 %
8	Reference	8	4.57 %
	Total	175	100 %



Interpreting the information found in the response to the question asked in question number 8, it appears that maximum 57 i.e. 32.57 % of the candidates use the library as a part of the preparations for the competitive examinations. While 41 i.e. 23.43 % candidates think that the library is a quiet place for reading. Out of all the respondents 32 i.e. 18.29 % candidates go to the library to read books. Many candidates use the library to read newspapers, use computers and reference literature to satisfy their information needs.

Tables and Graphs – 9: forms of candidate information

Sr. No	Forms of information	Frequency	Percentage
1	Printed sources	43	23.89 %
2	Electronic sources	35	19.44 %
3	Both of the sources	102	56.67 %
	Total	180	100 %

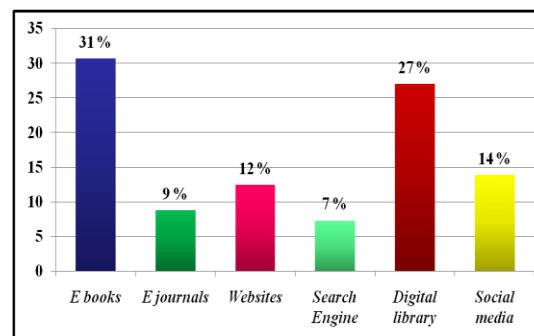


Interpreting the information found in the response to the question asked in question number 9, it appears that maximum 102 i.e. 56.67 % candidates respond regarding the use of information sources both printed and electronic information for the preparation of competitive examinations. Hence it can be said that candidates satisfy their reading related information needs by using printed and electronic information sources.

Tables and Graphs – 10: electronic sources of candidate choice

Sr. No	Electronic sources	Frequency	Percentage
1	E books	42	30.66 %
2	E journals	12	8.76 %
3	Websites	17	12.41 %
4	Search Engine	10	7.30 %

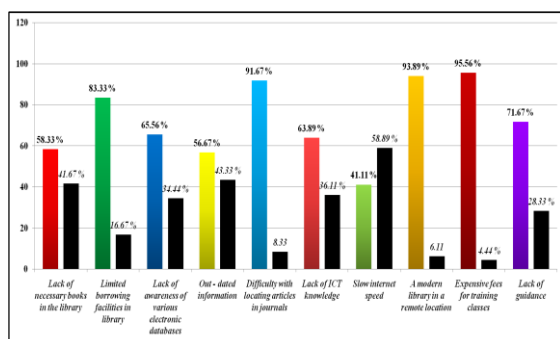
5	Digital library	37	27.01 %
6	Social media	19	13.87 %
	Total	137	100 %



Interpreting the information found in the response to the question asked in question number 10, it appears that maximum 42 i.e. 30.66% candidates consider e-book as the first choice, while 37 i.e. 27.01 % candidates prefer digital library among electronic sources, most of the candidates social media. Media, websites and e-journals are the preferred sources.

Tables and Graphs – 11: reasons hindering candidates while accessing information

Sr. No	Obstructive causes	(Percentage)	
		Yes (%)	No (%)
1	Lack of necessary books in the library	105 (58.33%)	75 (41.67 %)
2	Limited borrowing facilities in library	150 (83.33 %)	30 (16.67 %)
3	Lack of awareness of various electronic databases	118 (65.56%)	62 (34.44 %)
4	Out - dated information	102 (56.67 %)	78 (43.33 %)
5	Difficulty with locating articles in journals	165 (91.67 %)	15 (8.33 %)
6	Lack of ICT knowledge	115 (63.89 %)	65 (36.11 %)
7	Slow internet speed	74 (41.11 %)	106 (58.89 %)
8	A modern library in a remote location	169 (93.89 %)	11 (6.11 %)
9	Expensive fees for training classes	172 (95.56 %)	8 (4.44 %)
10	Lack of guidance	129 (71.67 %)	51 (28.33 %)



Conclusion

Through the medium of the present study responses were taken from the candidates while preparing for the competitive exams through various questions and interpreting all the responses it is found that most of the candidates are searching for information related to the exam preparation. Most of the aspirants get the subject information related to exam preparation through regular or even weekly library visits, joining coaching classes, seminars, online sources, newspapers and friends. Candidates want the information to be available in printed and electronic form so that they can easily read and use it. Candidates give various suggestions to create awareness in which they state that the reasons for their information barrier are inadequate library materials, lack of access to electronic services, inadequate and outdated information, remoteness of modern libraries and they state that due to expensive training classes for preparing competitive exams. Their information needs are stifled and they are deprived of employment opportunities.

Hence it can be said that for the overall development of the country it is necessary to keep the youth together and the youth will stay together only when they get employment according to their qualifications. The government should give special attention to the candidates to maintain their reading aptitude rather than preparing for the competitive examinations so that the problems of unemployment in the country and the society can be solved.

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