
ICT Utilization Skills and Information Seeking Behavior of Undergraduate Law Students: A Study

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Abstract

The study examines information-seeking behavior among law students at Karnataka State Law University, Hubballi. A survey and analysis using IBM SPSS software revealed that most students are proficient in internet usability and use it for academic information. However, many face challenges like low internet bandwidth and lack of search skills. The rapid expansion of modern information communication technologies has altered how students seek information globally. The study suggests that proficiency in computers and artificial intelligence is crucial for effective legal education. College administrators should ensure adequate ICT infrastructure in libraries to foster computer proficiency skills for law students.

Keywords

Information Seeking Behavior, Undergraduate law students, ICT, Digital era.

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1. Introduction

Information is essential for the advancement of human society, acting as a basis for making decisions, learning, fostering innovation, and promoting social progress. In today's world, information is frequently described as data that has been processed, contextualised, and made meaningful in ways that support comprehension and actions (Case & Given, 2016; Krishnamurthy et al., 2011). "Information seeking" pertains to the process by which individuals intentionally look for and acquire information to fulfill a need or address a challenge (Case & Given, 2016). This process of seeking information is a basic human endeavor that cuts across various demographics and fields, appearing in recognizable patterns and behaviors. In academic settings, it is vital for librarians to understand how both students and faculty seek information, as this knowledge guides the creation of collections, service models, and digital frameworks that cater to users' needs (Heri & Shome, 2025). Gudimani and Krishnamurthy (2020) describe information seeking as a purposeful and directed activity aimed at addressing specific academic tasks. This behavior is crucial within the realms of information science and library studies, serving as the cornerstone for user involvement in educational contexts (Krishnamurthy & Awari, 2015). Research indicates that students' approaches to seeking information are influenced by academic requirements such as completing assignments, getting ready for presentations, engaging in seminars, and conducting research projects (Ahiauzu & Ani, 2015).

The impact of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) on information benefits is evident through changes in the types, substance, and methods of information generation and delivery. The development of the internet as the largest repository of information and knowledge has transformed the roles of library and information science professionals from mediators to facilitators. It has provided enhanced tools for information transmission and shifted many traditional library services to online platforms (Madu et al., (2018). The accessibility and utilization of ICT tools depend on users' ICT skills, as well as the available resources and facilities. These factors enable users to leverage ICT effectively to meet their information needs. Literature has established that ICT components—such as computers, the internet, e-mail, and CD-ROMs—are essential for delivering information services in

libraries and information centers (Gilbert, 2015; Owolabi & Okocha, 2016).

2. Review of related literature

In the legal field, having access to accurate and timely information is essential for both academic and professional success. Law students and other aspiring legal professionals require strong skills in information retrieval and access to a wide range of information resources to support their educational and career development (Israel and Edesiri, 2014; Mulimani & Naikar, 2022). Information-seeking behavior refers to the strategies and processes individuals use to find and utilize information that meets their needs (Tenopir et al., 2012). Umar and Sokari (2020) pointed out that students in Nigeria often struggle to afford textbooks or access paid legal resources such as LexisNexis and Westlaw. Furthermore, a lack of information literacy skills exacerbates these problems, as numerous students lack training on how to effectively navigate digital resources (Ubwa & Ndor, 2020). In Nigeria, law students face unique challenges that hinder their ability to take full advantage of information resources. Many libraries suffer from inadequate ICT infrastructure, outdated materials, and budget constraints, limiting students' access to relevant and current legal information (Ubwa, et al., 2021). Olorunfemi et al., (2015) indicated that law students often develop self-reliance in ICT skills because of insufficient institutional support. These behaviors underscore the need for targeted interventions to improve access and literacy.

Drabowicz (2014) found a correlation between gender and the degree of computer anxiety. Their results showed that there is no significant difference between male and female students in their use of ICT, suggesting that both genders have equal opportunities to use ICT for academic and personal endeavors. Kumar (2017) study found impact of information communication technology on information seeking behaviors of users i.e. library visit, time spent on ISB activities, problems faced while seeking information, purposes of seeking information, rating of factors necessitating to seek information regularly, access to e-resources available in Digital Libraries, opinion about necessity of training for using electronic resources and preference of use of information resources. Internet Literacy Skills refer to the abilities one needs to effectively use the Internet. Obasuyi and Otabor (2012) described the Internet proficiency of university undergraduates as their overall ability to

utilize the Internet for educational purposes. Lou et. al. (2010) suggested that Internet education includes data literacy, which encompasses basic computer skills.

The authors further stated that Internet proficiency involves more than just browsing websites; it includes the ability to read, disseminate, and evaluate online sources, as well as to communicate, organise, and collaborate with others. To develop Internet proficiency, tertiary-level undergraduates should be able to perform the following tasks: (a) navigate the World Wide Web (WWW), (b) send email messages, (c) use the WWW to find specific information, (d) participate in online discussion groups and chat sessions, (e) send attachments via email, (f) download files from the Internet or WWW, (g) save images or graphics from web pages, and (h) create a web page. The findings from the Obasuyi and Otabor (2012) survey indicated that while most undergraduates could access and use many of the necessary Internet skills, they often struggled with creating web pages. This suggests that the Physical Science undergraduates at the University of Benin were generally Internet proficient. Similarly, Murray and Blyth (2011) found that respondents exhibited slightly below-average levels of Internet literacy. Additionally, Israel and Edesiri, (2014) discovered that university undergraduates had satisfactory ICT skills and could effectively use the Internet.

3. Objectives of the study

The present study is an attempt to examine the ICT skills and information seeking behavior between the male and female law students of Karnataka State Law University, Hubballi thus the study has been conducted with the following objectives:

1. To know the use of the internet by male and female law students;
2. To know the place and purpose of using the internet by male and female law students;
3. To know the methods of information-seeking behavior by the male and female law students;
4. To understand the problems faced in accessing and utilizing electronic information resources by the male and female law students;
5. To know the impact of ICT skills on information-seeking behaviour among male and female law students.

4. Research hypotheses

- H0. There is no significant difference between the use of internet among male and female students of the law college.
- H0. There is no statistical difference over the preference of the place of internet access among the male and female law students.
- H0. There is no significant difference between male and female student methods of information seeking behavior.
- H0. There is no significant difference regarding the problems faced in accessing and utilizing electronic information resources among the male and female law students.
- H0. There is no significant difference on the impact of ICT skills on Information seeking

behavior among male and female law students.

5. Methodology

This research utilized a survey method employing a structured questionnaire. The target population for this study consisted of law students from Karnataka State Law University, Hubballi. A simple random sampling approach was applied to select participants. The study's sample size consists of 757 individuals shown in table 1. Questionnaires were distributed to collect the data. Out of the distributed questionnaires, 590 were returned completed (resulting in a response rate of 77.93%). The data collected were analyzed using basic descriptive statistics and SPSS version 22.0.

Table 1: Number of students and courses and selected population

Law courses	Total Sample Size			Number of responses received		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
B.A. LL.B(Hon's)	156	216	372	149	198	347
B.B.A.LL.B(Hon's)	114	137	251	102	103	205
B.Com. LL.B	72	62	134	16	22	38
Total	342	425	757	267	323	590
Valid Percent				45.3%	54.7%	100

6. Data analysis and interpretation

The data collected from the undergraduate law students through a questionnaire have been analysed using IBM SPSS software. Statistical tests, namely, an independent sample T-test, were employed to test the formulated hypotheses.

6.1 General information of respondents

Table 2: General Information of respondents

Law courses	Number of Respondents			Percentage
	Male	Female	Total	
B.A. LL.B(Hon's)	149	198	347	58.81
B.B.A.LL.B(Hon's)	102	103	205	34.74
B.Com. LL.B	16	22	38	6.44
Total	267	323	590	100

Table 2 shows that the gender wise distribution of respondents. Among 590 respondents, it represents that 267 of them are male and 323 of them are female. The study is adequately represented from male and female category. The distribution across the three programs included B.A. LL.B (Hon's) 58.81%, B.B.A. LL.B (Hon's) 34.74%, and B.Com. LL.B 6.44% within Karnataka State Law University, Hubballi.

6.2 Use of internet by law students

Table 3: Use of the Internet by Law Students

Response	Male(n=267)		Female(n=323)		χ^2	Contingency Coefficient	Sig. <i>p</i>
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%			
Yes	245	91.76	293	90.71	0.200	.018	0.655*
No	22	8.23	30	9.28			
Note: * <i>p</i> > 0.05							

One of the main objectives of the study was to know the use of the internet by male and female undergraduate law students. The data in Table 3 shows that the majority, i.e., 245 (91.76% Male and 293 (90.71% Female) law students, make use of the internet for fulfilling various needs, including academic needs and personal information needs. To determine the significant association between internet use and the gender of law students, a χ^2 analysis

was performed. ($\chi^2 = 0.200$, $C = 0.018$, $P = 0.655$). It is found that there is no significant difference between the use of the internet among male and female students of the law college i.e., 245(91.76%) Male and 293(90.71%) Female, from the study, it is observed that most of the students use the internet to seek information for their various academic purposes.

6.3 Place of use of the internet

Table 4: Place of internet access (Multiple Choice)

Place	Male(n=245)		Female(n=293)		χ^2	Contingency Coefficient	Significance P-Value
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%			
Computer Lab	72	26.96	80	24.76	.369	.025	0.543
College (Wi-Fi)	67	25.09	74	22.91	.383	.025	0.536
Library	98	36.70	114	35.29	.126	.015	0.722
Residence/Hostel	39	14.60	48	14.86	.007	.004	0.931
Mobile phone	185	69.28	220	68.11	.094	.013	0.759
Note: <i>P</i> > 0.05							

Table 4 reveals the place of internet access among law students. The majority of the male and female law students i.e. (185(69.28 %) Male, and 220 (68.11 %) Female), access the internet through mobile phones. Followed by i.e. (98(36.70 %) Male and 114(35.29 %) Female) of them make use of the internet in the college library. Further, i.e.(72(26.96 %) Male and 80(24.76%) Female), at computer lab and (67(25.09 %) Male and 74(22.91%) Female)

through college Wi-Fi. Whereas a very small number of law students, i.e., 39 (14.60 %) Male and 48(14.86%) Female, access the internet from residence/ hostel. A closer look at the data presented in Table IV clearly indicates that there is no statistical difference over the preferences of the place of internet access among the male and female law students, χ^2 analysis ($P > 0.05$).

6.4 Methods of information-seeking behavior

Table 5: Methods of information seeking behaviour (Multiple choices)

Methods of seeking information Behavior	Male(n=267)		Female(n =323)		F-Value	Significance P-Value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
By trial and error method	.4382	.49710	.3808	.48634	6.958	0.009
With the guidance of library staff/Librarian	.5393	.49939	.4985	.50077	1.994	0.158
By the advice of friends	.4382	.49710	.3839	.48709	6.262	0.013
By external courses/training offered by the college	.2547	.43650	.2415	.42865	0.542	0.462
Guidance from teacher	.5094	.50085	.4737	.50008	0.510	0.475
Getting personal guidance from experts.	.1498	.35756	.1579	.36521	0.293	0.589
Note: <i>P</i> > 0.05						

Table 5 shows how the law students sought the needed information and the various methods followed for seeking information. Law students from the entire three courses expressed their information-seeking behaviour with the guidance of library staff/librarians, receiving the highest score, i.e. (Mean=.5393 Male and Mean=.4985 Female). Followed by majority of undergraduates i.e. (Mean=.5094 Male and Mean=.4737 Female), through guidance from a teacher, further i.e. (Mean=.4382 Male and Mean=.3839 Female) by the advice of friends, followed by i.e. (Mean=.4382 Male and Mean=.3808 Female) seek information by the trial and error method. Similarly, the average number of students i.e. (Mean=.2547 Male and Mean=.2415

Female) seeking information by attending external courses/training offered by the college, followed by compared to other methods, very few law students getting personal guidance from experts i.e. (Mean=.1498 Male and Mean=.1579 Female). The researcher employed an independent sample T-test to determine the differences in their behaviour among the male and female law students with respect to their several methods of seeking information. This clearly indicates that there is no significant difference between male and female students' methods of information-seeking behaviour.

6.5 Purpose of using the internet

Table 6: Purpose of using the internet (Multiple choices)

The purpose of using the internet	Male(n=245)		Female(n =293)		F-Value	Significanc P-Value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Surfing social network	0.5019	0.50094	0.4582	0.49902	1.862	0.173
Entertainment	0.5506	0.49837	0.5077	0.50072	3.083	0.080
Accessing Electronic resources	0.4082	0.49243	0.3560	0.47957	6.263	0.013
Remote Login	0.1723	0.37834	0.1672	0.37372	0.108	0.743
Inspect for job prospects	0.1536	0.36120	0.1579	0.36521	0.083	0.773

Note: P>0.05

Table 6 shows the purposes and uses of the internet by male and female law students. It is very interesting to note that the majority of the law students use the internet for entertainment, having the highest mean score i.e. (Mean=0.5506 Male and Mean=0.5077 Female), followed by i.e. (Mean=0.5019 Male and Mean=0.4582 Female) for surfing social networks, further i.e. (Mean=0.4082 Male and Mean=0.3560 Female) students use internet for accessing electronic resources. Also, it is observed, i.e. (Mean=0.1723 Male and Mean=0.37834 Female), that using the internet for academic purposes, furthermore, i.e. (Mean=0.1536 Male and Mean=0.1579 Female),

students use the internet for remote login and for inspection of job prospects. This clearly indicates that the majority of male and female law students use the internet for non-academic purposes. The result of the independent sample T-test grouped by the various purposes of use of the internet and gender of law students clearly shows that there is no significant difference between the male and female law students with respect to the purpose of use of the internet, where the p-value is more than 0.05.

6.6 Mode of access for seeking information

Table 7: Mode of access for seeking information

Mode of access	Male(n=267)		Female(n=323)		χ^2	Contingency Coefficient	Significanc P-Value
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%			
Print mode	78	29.21	92	34.45	0.038	0.008	0.845
Electronic/Digital mode	49	18.35	56	20.97	0.03	0.013	0.748
Equal preference for both	150	56.17	168	62.92	1.022	0.042	0.312

Note: P>0.05

The present study has also attempted to determine the preferred mode of access for seeking information by male and female law students. Table 7 reveals that

most of the law students i.e. (150 (56.17%) Male and 168 (62.92%) Female) have given equal preference for both print and electronic modes. Followed by i.e.

(78 (29.21%) Male and 92 (34.45%) Female) students preferred only the print mode of access. It is observed that a smaller percentage of students, i.e., 49 (18.35%) Male and 56 (20.97%) Female, preferred only the electronic/Digital mode of information access. Researcher employed the χ^2 test to determine the significant difference between the

mode of access for seeking information and the gender of the law students, and it was found that there is no significant difference between the mode of access for seeking information and the gender of the law students.

6.7 Purposes of information needs

Table 8: Purposes of information needs

Purposes of information needs	Male(n=267)		Female(n=323)		χ^2	Contingency coefficient	Significance P-Value
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%			
For Study/ Assignment writing	234	87.64	279	86.37	0.205	0.019	0.650
For information gathering	136	50.93	153	47.36	0.745	0.036	0.388
Keeping update in subject trends	103	38.57	114	35.29	0.677	0.034	0.410
Career Development	111	41.57	115	35.60	2.204	0.061	0.138
Preparing for Moot court Practice/ Competition	103	38.57	114	35.29	0.677	0.034	0.410
For Project work completion	72	26.96	87	26.93	0.000	0.000	0.993

Note: P > 0.05

Table 8 shows the purpose of information needs of undergraduate law students. The majority of the law students need information for study/assignment writing, i.e., 234 (87.64%) Male and 279 (86.37%) Female, followed by 136 (50.93% Male and 153 (47.36%) Female law students. The purpose of information needs for these law students is to gather the required information. Further i.e. (103 (38.57%) Male and 114 (35.29%) Female) students' purposes of

information needs is for keeping up to date in subject trends and preparing for Moot court practice/competition, followed by i.e. (111 (41.5%)Male and 115 (35.60%) Female) need information for career development.

6.8 Problems faced in accessing and utilizing electronic information resources

Table 9: Problems faced in accessing and utilizing electronic information resources

Problems	Male(n=245)		Female (n =293)		F-Value	Significance P-Value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Low internet Bandwidth	0.5019	0.50094	0.4551	0.49875	2.152	.143
Inadequate Wi-Fi range	0.4457	0.49798	0.4087	0.49235	2.955	.086
Inadequate journal subscription	0.2846	0.45209	0.2755	0.44748	.239	.625
Lack of search Skills	0.4157	0.49377	0.3653	0.48227	5.755	.017
Restricted access by the college/Institution	0.2509	0.43437	0.2291	0.42091	1.518	.218
Directing Commercial Sites (Paid links)	0.3258	0.46957	0.3251	0.46913	.002	.969

Note: P > 0.05

To examine the various problems faced by law students regarding accessing and utilizing electronic information resources. Table 9 presents Mean score data which reveals that majority of law students i.e. (Mean=0.5019 Male and Mean=0.4551 Female) students faced problem of low internet bandwidth, followed by i.e. (Mean=0.4457 Male and

Mean=0.4087 Female) students said inadequate Wi-Fi range as hindrance, and, most importantly i.e. (Mean=0.4157 Male and Mean=0.3653 Female) law students expressed that lack of search skills is the main problem for them in accessing and utilizing electronic information resources. Further, i.e. (Mean=0.2509 Male and Mean= 0.2291 Female), students

marked that restricted access by the college/ institution is the reason as well as the problem in accessing electronic information resources frequently. Table 9 also shows the results of the independent sample T-test grouped by the gender of the students. The result shows that there is no significant difference between male and female law students' problems faced in accessing and utilizing electronic information resources.

6.9 Impact of ICT skills on information-seeking behaviour

Table 10: Impact of ICT skills on information-seeking behaviour

Impact	Male(n=267)		Female(n =323)		F-Value	Significance P-Value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
I can define a search strategy by using appropriate keywords	3.8614	1.15014	3.8266	1.16934	0.196	0.658
I can adjust and improve the search if needed	3.8352	1.14174	3.7957	1.16432	0.361	0.548
I can use numerous field codes for more focused and accurate search with a single query	3.5543	1.23234	3.4985	1.22949	0.038	0.845
I need training on search techniques to make use of e-resources effectively	3.5918	1.27807	3.5170	1.29098	0.237	0.626

Note: P>0.05

The data on the impact of ICT skills on information-seeking behaviour are presented in Table 10. shows that most of the law students can define a search strategy by using appropriate keywords i.e. (Mean=3.8614 Male and Mean=3.8266 Female), followed by i.e. (Mean=3.8352 Male and Mean=3.7957 Female) students can adjust and improve the search if needed. Further, i.e. (Mean=3.5543 Male and Mean=3.4985 Female), Law students can use numerous field codes for more focused and accurate search with a single query. The study also reveals, i.e. (Mean=3.5918 Male and Mean=3.5170 Female), that law students need training on search techniques to make use of e-resources effectively. This is how the ICT skills have an impact on information-seeking behaviour. The opinion of the male law students was also almost similar to the opinion of the female law students. The result of the independent sample t-test clearly shows that there is no significant difference in the opinion of male and female law students on the impact of ICT skills on information-seeking behaviour.

6.10 Testing of hypotheses

The formulated hypotheses were tested using various statistical techniques, namely, χ^2 and an independent sample T-test (Table 11). Table 11 shows that all five null hypotheses were accepted since the p-value is more than 0.05.

Table 11: Testing of hypotheses

Sl. No.	Hypotheses	Test applied	P-value and result
H0	There is no significant difference between the use of the internet among male and female students of the law college.	χ^2	P>0.05
H0	There is no statistical difference over the preference of the place of internet access among the male and female law students.	χ^2	P>0.05
H0	There is no significant difference between male and female students methods of information seeking behaviour.	T-test	P>0.05
H0	There is no significant difference between male and female law students' problems faced in accessing and utilizing electronic information resources.	T-test	P>0.05
H0	There is no significant difference in the opinion of male and female law students ICT skills impact on Information seeking behavior.	T-test	P>0.05

7. Discussion and conclusion

The study indicates that most of the law students, including male and female, use the internet through mobile phones, which shows that law students are not dependent on the college Wi-Fi or computer lab, but it is found that at least one fourth of the students are using the internet in the library. It is observed from the study that the majority of the male and female law students prefer to use the internet for their information seeking. Thus, the authority should motivate students to get the benefit of the Wi-Fi facilities of the college. Methods of information seeking behavior of male and female law students include guidance from library staff/librarian, followed by guidance from a teacher and advice from friends. It is observed that the undergraduate law students are highly dependent on the teachers for information seeking.

Internet use has become a pivotal part of life in getting the required information. However, it is observed from the study that most of the male and female law students use the internet for entertainment, surfing social networks and accessing electronic resources. The basic information needs of undergraduate law students revolve around their curriculum. They need information for their study, writing assignments, keeping updated with recent developments in their subjects and professional practices, such as moot courts, judicial reviews, etc. The study also indicated that law students face certain problems while accessing e-resources, such as low internet bandwidth, lack of awareness of the resources and insufficient skills to search for the required information, etc. These problems hinder the effective use of the library's e-resources. Therefore, the college authorities must organize regular orientation programs and workshops on search skills and strategies so that the law students can make effective use of the resources to enhance their knowledge and professional skills leading them for the overall development of their personality. Finally, the study opines that ICT can have a great impact on the Information Seeking Behaviour of law students, provided the authorities must initiate appropriate measures as suggested above.

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