

Information Seeking Behaviour of Engineering Students in Tamil Nadu: A Study

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Abstract

The major aim of this study was to find out the Information Seeking Behavior (ISB) of students from different disciplines of five engineering colleges, affiliated with Anna University located at Tirunelveli District. Tamil Nadu. India. A well-structured questionnaire was circulated to collect the needed information from various branches such as Mechanical Engineering, Electrical and Electronics Engineering, Computer Science Engineering, Information Technology and Civil Engineering, in order to meet the objectives of this research. The study reveals that the primary purpose on seeking information by the respondents was to keep current and latest information by referring dailies as well as seeking information to abreast in their subjects to obtain educational excellence. This study pinpoints that students were facing major problem on power supply (Electricity), computer facilities, and poor shelf arrangement. This research suggested that setting up the latest power instrumentations to have continuous power supply in the library and also provide more number of updated systems with high compatibility of software. This research also recommended that documents in the library should be arranged properly in the shelves to seek information easily and conveniently.

Key Words: Information seeking behavior (ISB), Engineering colleges, Library, Power supply, Tirunelveli

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1. Introduction

Information is a vital source for everything and the behaviour of information seeking is entirely varied from one to one. The key purpose of seeking information is to acquire knowledge to meet their requirements.

ISB deals the attitude of the information seekers. ISB refers the way that how people search and utilize information for their different purpose.

Numerous research studies associated on ISB and moreover, most of the researchers accompanied survey method. We, authors' implemented survey method as it is a result oriented and popular one. The present research conducted in five engineering colleges namely Francis Xavier Engineering College, PET Engineering College, SCAD College of Engineering & Technology, Cape Institute of Technology, and Einstein College of Engineering which affiliated with Anna University, located at Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu, India.

In 2000, Wilson described information behaviour as the totality of human behaviour in relation to sources and channels of information, including both active and passive information-seeking, and information use. He described information seeking behaviour as purposive seeking of information as a consequence of a need to satisfy some goal.

ISB helps the librarians /library information officers / knowledge managers to know users' attitudes, needs, and expectations as users' behaviour tell them that what you have to do and how you have to serve.

2. Review of Literature

Literature gives an outline for the research and it helps the researcher(s) to do the research in a systematic way after analyses of previous studies on a particular topic. We reviewed studies which were related to the current research.

Kadli et.al (2012) examined a case study on changing patterns of information seeking behaviour with faculty members at commerce colleges in Mumbai, India. This article describes the preferences of information sources by faculty members. They conducted research on information seeking behaviour on time invested, preference for information source formats, satisfaction, and primary motivation. In their study they sought out that environment which affects significantly to the faculties while seeking information

Islam and Ahmed (2012) conducted literature review studies in developed and developing countries to find out the needs and information seeking behaviour of rural residents. Authors found that information needs of rural populations differ from district to district and from nation to nation depends on social and economic factors. The common needs of rural dwellers were related to day to day life.

Korobili, Stella, et.al. (2011) done a survey on engineering graduate students at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in Greece. Authors used statistical analysis in order to know the students' abilities and habits on information seeking behaviour of the usage of electronic databases, methods adopted to retrieve data from search engines

Raza et al. (2010) conducted the survey to find out the users attitude towards services provided by Central Drug Research Institute (CDRI) Lucknow. They found that most of the users adopting subject wise search and the users were satisfied with the library services.

Owolabi and Jimoh (2010) distributed 480 questionnaires to reveal the Information Seeking Behaviour of Polytechnic Students at Akanulbiam Federal Polytechnic, Unwana Nigeria. In their study they found that users seeking information to acquire academic excellence. The study shows that users giving much priority to textbooks while seeking information and followed by journals.

Peiling Wang et al. (2007) used a semi-structured interview method, and a hybrid quantitative and qualitative approach to discover users behaviour on use and non-use of Internet enabled information and communication technologies/resources (IICTs). The research also revealed what IICTs were adopted by the users to find the information in the Internet Age.

Wessel et al. (2006) conducted web-based survey to extract data from the respondents about their behaviour on usage of electronic library resources at University of Pittsburgh and the medical centre. Authors concentrated on the use of specific electronic library resources; what type of information users wanted, and the types of problems encountered while seeking information.

Patitungkho and Deshpande (2005) conducted the survey on information seeking behavior of faculty members of Rajabhat Universities in Bangkok, Thailand. They collected the data through

questionnaire. In their research they found that most of faculty members seeking information through textbooks, periodicals, and followed by newspapers. The respondents preferred English language to seek information from the library and apart from that they prefer Google search engine for their online search from the Internet.

3. Objectives of the Study

1. To study the methods of information seeking by engineering college students
2. To find out the purpose of information seeking by them
3. To know what searching strategy they apply while seeking information
4. To reveal the barriers faced by the respondents

4. Scope and limitations of the study

The scope of the present study is restricted only to the engineering colleges affiliated to Anna University, Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu, India.

5. Pilot Study

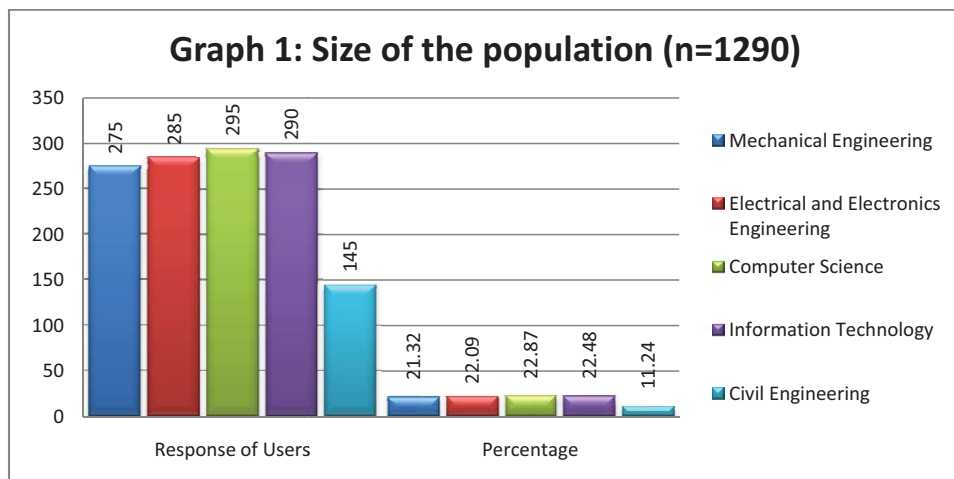
The pilot study was conducted in order to have effective research. The researchers distributed questionnaires among 30 engineering students to conduct pilot study to have meaningful and fruitful research to enable researchers to modify the questionnaire according to the research point of view.

6. Methodology

A well-structured questionnaire distributed to collect the primary data to achieve the objectives of the research study. The survey projected to collect the basic information about the information seeking behavior of engineering college students from five selected colleges.

6.1 Sample population

The investigators distributed 1688 questionnaires to randomly selected sample. In that 1496 filled in questionnaires were received from the respondents. Out of 1496 questionnaires, only 1290 (86.22%) questionnaire were selected for examining the data and 206 (13.78%) questionnaires were rejected because of incomplete response from the respondents.



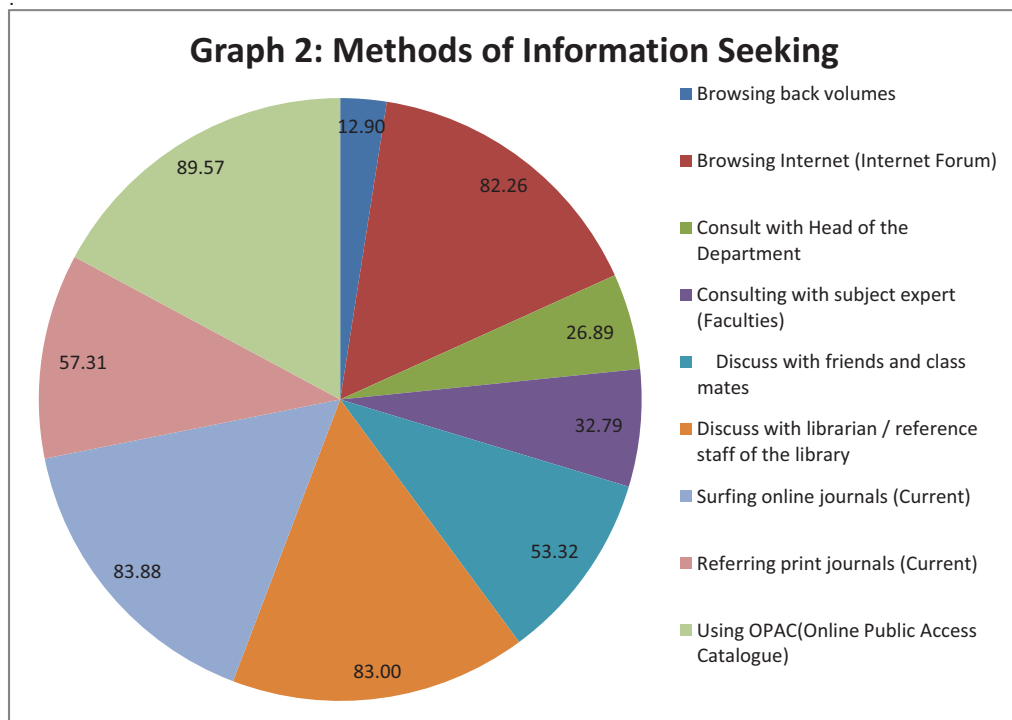
A survey was conducted in five engineering colleges, affiliated with Anna University located at Tirunelveli District. Tamil Nadu. India. The total population was 1290 from different departments such as Mechanical Engineering, Electrical and Electronics Engineering, Computer Science Engineering, Information Technology and Civil Engineering. The above graph shows that the highest respondents were from Computer Science Engineering 295 (22.87%), followed by Information Technology 290 (22.48%) and the lowest respondents were from Civil Engineering (11.24%).

7. Data analysis and interpretation

Data has been collected via questionnaire method; the same was examined and interpreted with graphs in an easiest way to understand the research study.

7.1 Methods of information seeking

A question was asked to the respondents to know the methods on seeking information. The graph 2: illustrated that respondents were adopting different methods on seeking information



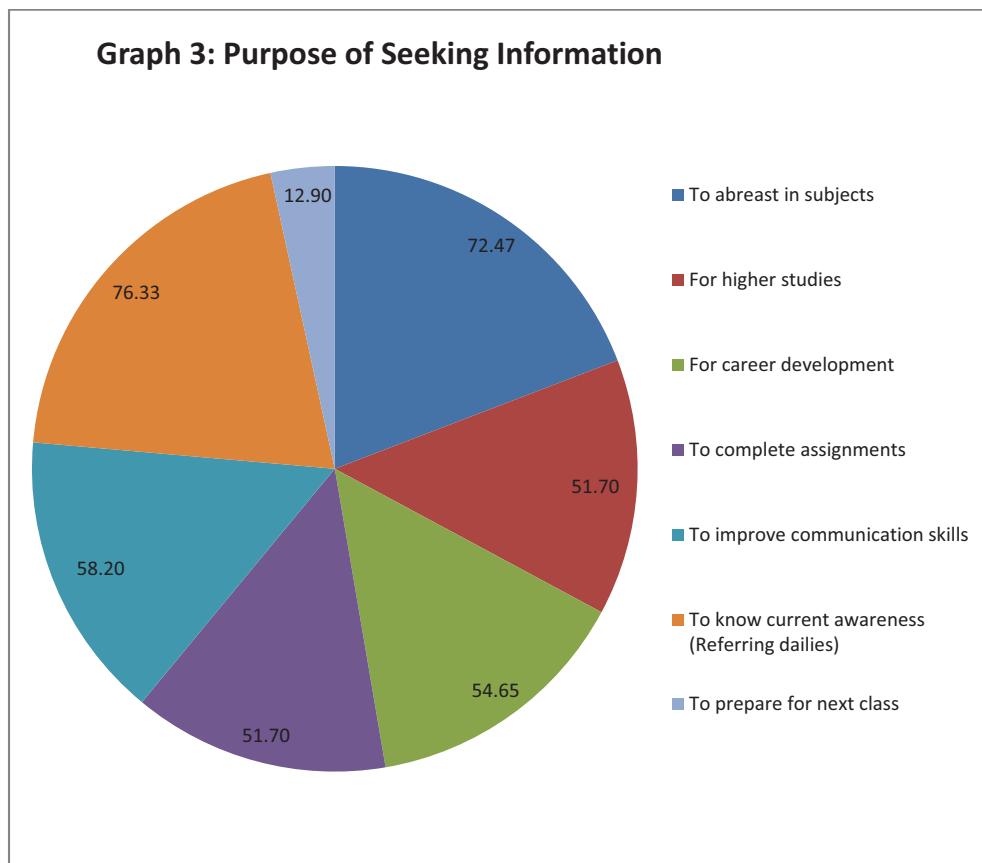
Multiple answers permitted

It was clearly shows that 89.57% of users were using OPAC to seek information from the library as it shows that OPAC was the prime and foremost method implemented by the respondents. Further followed by 83.88% were surfing online journals (current), 83.00% discuss with librarian / reference staff of the library, 82.26% were browsing Internet (Internet forum), 57.31% referring print journals (Current), 53.32% discuss with friends, 32.79% were consulting with subject expert (Faculties),

26.89% were consulting with Head of the Department, and the least method adopted by the students for seeking information was (12.90%) browsing back volumes (Print & Online).

7.2 Purpose of seeking information

The researchers want to know the 'purpose of seeking information' by the respondents. Purpose may differ from one to one and group to group. To meet one of the research objectives, a question was asked to the respondents about the purpose on seeking information.



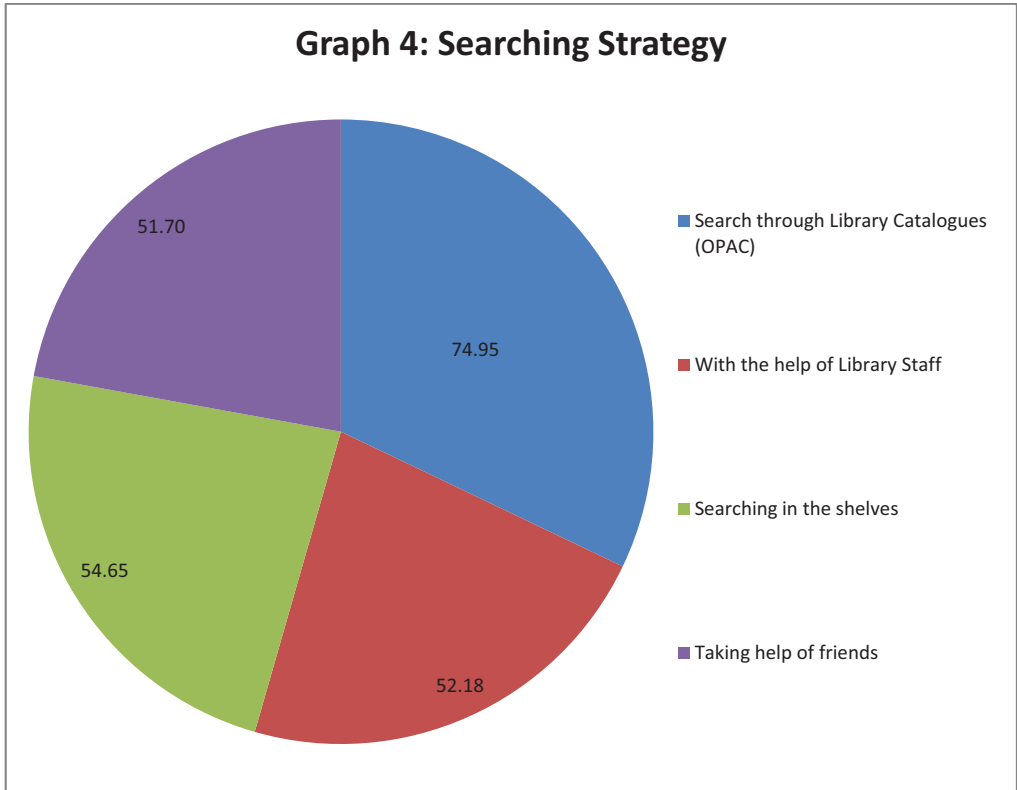
Multiple answers permitted

The Graph - 3 shows that 76.33% majority of the respondents were seeking information to know the current awareness to keep up-to-date information (Referring dailies). It was good to know that 72.47% of the respondents were seeking information to abreast in their subjects to achieve educational excellence, 58.20% were seeking information to improve their communication skills, and 54.65% were seeking information for career development.

The interesting fact was similar for both seeking information for higher studies and also to complete assignments i.e. 51.70%. The respondents responded 12.90% about their seeking information to prepare for next class.

7.3 Searching Strategy

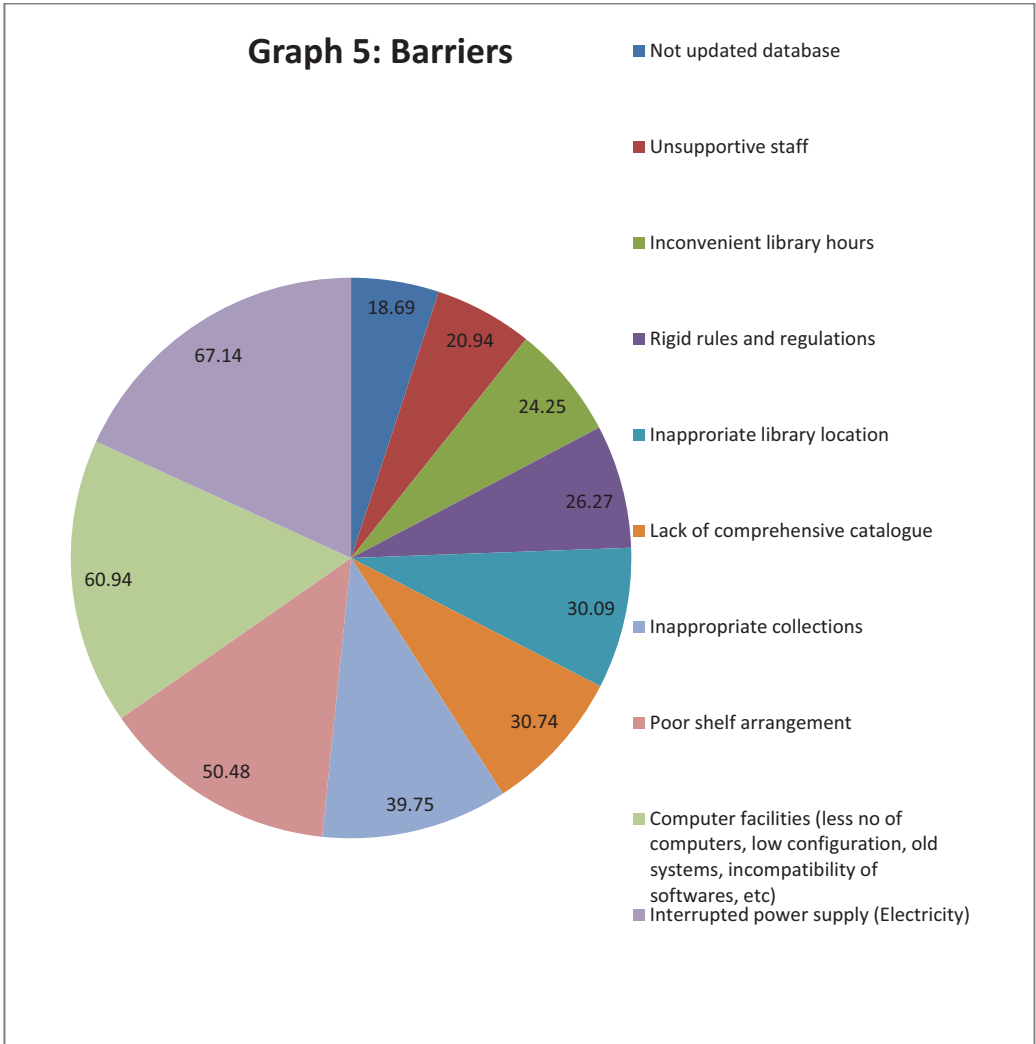
Searching strategy is varying from time to time and person to person. The authors want to know the searching strategy as it is mandatory to fulfill the needs of the research purpose.



A question was questioned to the engineering college students “what are the searching methods they used for their needed information”. Graph 4: reveals that 74.95% of the respondents searching information through Library Catalogues (OPAC), 54.65% were searching (documents) information from the shelves, 52.18 % were adopting searching strategy that they were getting help with Library staff and 51.70% of the respondents were seeking information by taking help of friends

7.4 Barriers while seeking information

One of the major objectives of the study is to reveal the barriers faced by the respondents. This research helped us to ascertain the problem / barriers faced by the users while seeking information. The below graph illustrates very clearly.



Graph 5: depicts that 67.14% of the respondents pointed out that Interrupted power supply (Electricity) was the major problem while seeking information followed by 60.94% of the respondents faced Computer facilities (less no of computers, low configuration, old systems, incompatibility of software, etc.). 50.48% of the respondents revealed that poor shelf arrangement, 39.75% of faced difficulty inappropriate collections, 30.74% of the respondents given their problems as Lack of comprehensive catalogue, 30.09% of the respondents were facing barriers on Inappropriate library location, 26.27% were shown their difficulties as Rigid rules and regulation of the library, 24.25% were highlighted their barriers as Inconvenient library hours, 20.94% of the respondents said that Unsupportive staff, and 18.69% of the respondents stated that Not updated database.

8. Findings

The outcomes of this study shortened as follows:

- The most respondents were from Computer Science Engineering (22.87%)
- Regarding methods of information seeking, it was found that 89.57% of the users applied OPAC to seek information; however 83.88 % were surfing online journals (current).
- The study reveals that most of the respondents 76.33% were having habit of Referring dailies to know the current awareness to keep up-to-date; even so, 72.47% of the respondents were seeking information to abreast in their subjects to attain academic excellence
- Regarding searching strategy, it was clear from the research that 74.95% were adopted searching strategy of Library Catalogue (OPAC) and followed by searching documents from the shelves (54.65%)
- This study helped to know barriers faced by the respondents. The major (67.14%) problem was Interrupted power supply (Electricity), computer facilities (60.94%) and followed by poor shelves arrangement (50.48%)

9. Suggestions

The study shows that least number of respondents (12.90%) was browsing back volumes (Print & Online). The librarian and library staff members should bring awareness about the prominence of Back volumes as it contains enormous of information for research purpose, can prepare for their exams by referring old university exam question papers and also, can improve their subject knowledge by referring relevant back volumes (Print & Online)

- Power supply (Electricity) 67.14% can be solved by implementing new uninterrupted power supply instrumentations to serve the users of the library as it was the major barriers faced by the respondents.
- Computer facilities (60.94%) was the another big barriers faced by the respondents. Thus, library authority and librarian can bring forth this problem to the management to install the latest computers with high configuration and also with latest software
- Documents should be arrangement properly (50.48%) in order to utilize the library resources in an efficient way.
- It is suggested that library rules and regulations (26.27%) shall be made easy to the users to utilize the library in a fruitful way.
- The study also reveals that library hours (24.25%) can be extended to invite more users to use the library to meet their needs.

10. Conclusion

Information Seeking Behavior (ISB) is differ from person to person, place to place, and time to time and also based on their needs. The current study attempted to inspect the ISB by five engineering colleges of different disciplines. The result of this research is most of the students were seeking information from OPAC and surfing online journals (current). This study brought out the problems faced by the users i.e. power supply and computer facilities.

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