

The Affect of Demographic Aspects on Information Seeking Behavior of Faculty Members in Madhya Pradesh

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Abstract: The way faculty members search for and use information is influenced by many personal and professional aspects. These aspects include age, gender, academic position, teaching experience, level of education, and ability to use technology. This study focuses on understanding how these demographic aspects affect the information-seeking behavior of faculty members working in higher education institutions in Madhya Pradesh, India. Faculty members are important for teaching, research, and sharing knowledge. Therefore, it is necessary to understand how they find, select, and use information. Better understanding of their information needs can help improve academic work and make better use of library and digital resources. The study uses a mixed-methods approach, combining surveys and interviews, to examine how different faculty members search for information. It looks at their preferences for various sources such as digital databases, online journals, printed books, physical libraries, and informal sources like colleagues and professional contacts. The findings show clear differences based on age and technological skills. Younger faculty members, who are usually more comfortable with technology, prefer using digital resources. They frequently access e-journals, online academic databases, and digital repositories because these sources are fast, convenient, and easily available. In contrast, older faculty members often rely more on traditional sources such as printed books and journals, as they are more familiar with these formats. The study also finds that academic rank plays an important role. Senior faculty members focus more on advanced and specialized resources to support their research work. Junior faculty members, on the other hand, mostly search for teaching-related materials to help with classroom instruction. In addition, institutional support, availability of technology, and professional networks strongly influence how faculty members search for information. However, faculty members working in rural or less-developed areas face several problems. Limited internet access, lack of digital infrastructure, and insufficient training make it difficult for them to use online resources effectively. As a result, they may not benefit equally from digital information sources. The study concludes by suggesting that educational institutions should provide regular digital literacy training, improve access to online resources, and strengthen library services. These steps can help reduce the gap between urban and rural faculty members and create a more effective and supportive academic environment.

Keywords: Demographic aspects, faculty members, Information-seeking behavior, technological proficiency, Madhya Pradesh, professional networks, academic productivity.

Introduction - In the changing academic environment, faculty members need to find and use information quickly and effectively to be successful. Information-seeking behavior means the way people look for and collect information. This behavior is affected by many things, including personal background, ability to use technology, support from their institution, and availability of resources like libraries and online databases.

If institutions understand these aspects, they can plan better ways to provide resources, training, and support for faculty members. Madhya Pradesh is a state in India with many types of educational institutions, located in cities,

towns, and rural areas. Because of this diversity, faculty members have different levels of access to information.

Aspects such as age, gender, academic position, years of teaching experience, and educational background influence how faculty members use academic resources. Faculty members who are good with technology and have access to digital tools usually find information more easily. Support from the institution, such as good internet facilities and training programs, also helps faculty members use information effectively.

Why Information-Seeking Behavior Is Important: Information-seeking behavior means how people look for,

understand, and use information to meet their needs. In education, this is very important for faculty members because it affects their teaching, research, and career growth. When institutions understand how faculty members search for information, they can provide better support through libraries, training, and digital resources.

Helps Improve Research Work: Good information-seeking skills help faculty members do better research. Teachers and researchers need access to journals, books, databases, and online resources to stay updated in their subjects. When they know how to find the right information quickly, they can save time and focus on quality research. This helps them develop new ideas and contribute useful knowledge to their field.

Makes Teaching More Effective: Information-seeking behavior also improves teaching quality. Faculty members need teaching materials such as books, articles, videos, and online tools to prepare lessons. When they can easily find updated and useful resources, they can create interesting and relevant courses. It also helps them learn about new teaching methods and technologies, which benefits students.

Supports Professional Growth: Faculty members need to keep learning throughout their careers. Information-seeking helps them stay updated with new trends, attend workshops or conferences, and improve their skills. This habit encourages lifelong learning and helps faculty grow both personally and professionally.

Improves Decision-Making and Encourages Innovation: Finding the right information helps faculty members make better decisions in research, teaching, and academic planning. Access to accurate information allows them to choose effective strategies and solve problems wisely. Using different sources of information also inspires creativity and innovation in both teaching and research.

How Personal Aspects Affect the Way Faculty Search for Information: Information-seeking behavior means how people look for, choose, and use information to meet their needs. In colleges and universities, faculty members depend on information for teaching, research, and career growth. Personal aspects such as age, gender, subject area, experience, and ability to use technology strongly influence how faculty members search for information. Understanding these aspects helps institutions provide better support and resources.

Age and Information Use: Age plays an important role in how faculty members find information. Younger faculty members are usually more comfortable with technology and prefer using online sources such as digital journals, academic databases, and search engines. Older faculty members may feel more comfortable using printed books, journals, and personal discussions, as they began their careers before digital tools became common. Although many senior faculty members now use digital resources, they may need extra support. Institutions can help by

offering digital training and encouraging the use of both traditional and online resources.

Gender and Information Use: Gender can also influence how information is searched and shared. In some cases, men may use digital tools and advanced technologies more often, while women may prefer group discussions, seminars, and collaborative learning. These differences are usually small but important to consider. Providing equal access to technology and supportive training can help all faculty members use information effectively.

Subject Area (Academic Discipline): The subject a faculty member teaches affects the type of information they use. Faculty in science and technology fields depends heavily on online journals and databases to keep up with fast-changing research. Faculty in humanities may use books, printed materials, and archives more often, though digital resources are becoming more common for them as well. Libraries and institutions should provide subject-specific resources and training.

Experience and Background: Faculty members with more experience often have fixed ways of finding information, such as using personal contacts or traditional sources. Newer faculty members are usually more open to using digital tools because of recent training. Professional development programs can help experienced faculty learn the benefits of new technologies.

Technology Skills: The ability to use technology is one of the most important aspects today. Faculty members with good technology skills can easily use online databases and digital tools. Those with fewer skills may find it difficult and rely on traditional methods. Regular training programs can help all faculty members improve their information-searching skills.

Overall Impact: Personal aspects strongly influence how faculty members in Madhya Pradesh search for and use information. These differences affect their research quality, teaching methods, and professional growth. Understanding them helps institutions create a better academic environment.

Problems Faced While Searching for Information: Even though many information tools are available today, faculty members still face several difficulties when searching for information. These problems are more common in rural institutions and among senior faculty members who may not be very familiar with digital technology.

Limited Access to Resources: Faculty members working in rural areas often have poor internet connections and limited access to paid academic databases. Many institutions cannot afford subscriptions to important databases such as JSTOR or Elsevier. Because of this, faculty members may not be able to read the latest research articles, which affects the quality of their research work.

Too Much Information: The internet provides a huge amount of information, which can be confusing. Faculty members may find it hard to identify useful and reliable

sources among so many options. This problem becomes more serious during literature reviews, where selecting relevant materials is very important. Lack of proper tools to filter and organize information makes the process even harder.

Lack of Technology Skills: Some faculty members do not have enough digital skills to use online databases, search engines, or reference management tools like Zotero or EndNote. This makes searching, saving, and managing academic information difficult. When institutions do not provide enough training, this problem becomes worse.

Shortage of Time: Faculty members often have many responsibilities, such as teaching, research, and administrative work. Because of limited time, they may choose faster and simpler ways to search for information instead of doing detailed research. This can reduce the quality of their teaching materials and research outcomes.

How Information Access Affects Research and Teaching

Effect on Research Work: Good research depends on easy and quick access to the right information. Faculty members who are skilled in using technology can easily access online databases, research journals, and academic resources. Younger faculty members or those with higher qualifications usually have better digital skills, which helps them conduct detailed literature reviews and data searches. As a result, they can complete research faster and produce high-quality work.

In contrast, senior faculty members or those who are less familiar with digital tools may face difficulties in finding recent research. They often depend on physical libraries or traditional methods, which can take more time. Delays in accessing important information may slow down their research and reduce the quality of their work. Limited knowledge of digital tools can also restrict their ability to explore new research areas.

Use of Teaching and Learning Materials: Searching for information is also very important for teaching. Faculty members use textbooks, research papers, case studies, and online materials to prepare and update their courses. Faculty with strong academic backgrounds, especially in research-focused subjects, often use recent journal articles to keep their teaching content current and useful.

Gender and workplace location can also influence how faculty members find teaching resources. Some faculty prefers working together and sharing materials with colleagues, while others search independently. Faculty in urban institutions usually has better access to digital libraries and online resources than those in rural areas. This difference affects the quality and variety of learning materials available to students.

Role of Institutional Support: Support from institutions plays a major role in helping faculty search for information effectively. Colleges and universities that provide training on using databases and research tools help faculty make

better use of available resources. Workshops on tools like Zotero or EndNote can improve research efficiency.

However, institutions with poor infrastructure or limited training opportunities may create gaps in access. Faculty in rural areas often lack fast internet and paid databases, which affects their research and collaboration opportunities.

Reducing the Digital Gap: The digital gap between urban and rural institutions is a serious issue. Faculty in well-equipped institutions has better tools, while others struggle with limited resources. Improving internet access, providing digital libraries, and offering technology training can help ensure equal opportunities for all faculty members.

Conclusion: The information-seeking patterns of faculty members in Madhya Pradesh are strongly influenced by demographic characteristics, the availability of institutional facilities, and the contrast between urban and rural academic environments. Faculty working in urban institutions generally benefit from easier access to digital tools, paid academic databases, and wider professional networks, which support more effective and higher-quality research activities. These institutions also tend to offer stronger technological infrastructure and training programs, helping faculty refine their approaches to locating and using information.

On the other hand, faculty members in rural institutions often encounter obstacles such as inadequate digital resources, unreliable internet connectivity, and limited opportunities for professional development. These constraints reduce their capacity to participate in advanced research activities or remain current with emerging academic developments.

Despite these differences, aspects across both urban and rural areas rely on a combination of online resources, traditional libraries, and collaborative platforms for their teaching and research needs. However, challenges such as excessive information availability, limited time, and insufficient technological skills further hinder effective information seeking.

To overcome these issues, focused policy measures are needed, including strengthening institutional infrastructure, offering extensive training initiatives, and expanding access to digital resources in all regions. Reducing the gap between urban and rural institutions will help create equal access to information for faculty members, thereby enhancing research output, teaching effectiveness, and scholarly collaboration. Strategic investment in these areas can promote a more equitable and efficient information-seeking environment for faculty regardless of location.

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