Use and Awareness of E-Resources by Postgraduate Students of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Barkatullah University, Bhopal: A Survey

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ABSTRACT

The study investigates the use and awareness of e-resources among postgraduate students in the Faculty of Social Sciences at Barkatullah University, Bhopal. E-resources, such as online journals, databases, and digital libraries, have become increasingly important in academic research and learning. This paper aims to assess the level of awareness, access, and utilization of e-resources by postgraduate students, as well as identify the barriers and challenges they face. The study employed a survey-based methodology, involving a structured questionnaire distributed to a sample of 110 postgraduate students across various departments within the Faculty of Social Sciences. The findings reveal a moderate level of awareness and utilization of e-resources among the respondents.

Introduction

The rapid advancement of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has revolutionized the way information is accessed, stored, and disseminated in academic institutions. In the digital age, the landscape of academic research and teaching has been transformed by the proliferation of electronic resources (e-resources). E-resources encompass a wide range of digital materials, including electronic journals, e-books, databases, institutional repositories, and online reference tools. These resources have become increasingly integral to the scholarly workflow, facilitating access to a wealth of information, enhancing research productivity, and supporting teaching and learning activities.

The emergence of e-resources, such as online journals, databases, e-books, and digital libraries, has significantly transformed the landscape of scholarly communication and research (Madhusudhan, 2010). E-resources offer numerous benefits, including increased accessibility, enhanced search capabilities, and the potential for cost-effective access to a wider range of information sources (Dhanavandan &Tamizhchelvan, 2012).In the context of higher education, the effective use of e-resources is particularly crucial for postgraduate students, who are actively engaged in research, literature review, and the dissemination of knowledge. Postgraduate students in the social sciences are expected to stay up-to-date with the latest developments in their respective fields, which often requires the use of diverse e-resources (Sarasvathy&Namavalli, 2013).

Barkatullah University, located in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, India, is a prominent institution offering postgraduate programs in various social science disciplines,

including Economics, Political Science, Sociology, and Social Work. The Faculty of Social Sciences at Barkatullah University plays a vital role in promoting research and academic excellence among its postgraduate students. Understanding the level of awareness and utilization of e-resources by these students is crucial for the university to enhance its digital learning ecosystem and support research activities.Understanding the use and awareness of e-resources among postgraduate students, is crucial for developing effective strategies to optimize the utilization of these valuable resources. The study investigates the use and awareness of e-resources among postgraduate students in the Faculty of Social Sciences at Barkatullah University, Bhopal.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objectives of this study are:

1. To assess the level of awareness and usage of e-resources among postgraduate students in the Faculty of Social Sciences at Barkatullah University, Bhopal.

2. To identify the factors influencing the use of e-resources by postgraduate students.

3. To provide recommendations for improving the use and integration of e-resources in the Faculty of Social Sciences.

Literature Review

A study by Cheng et al. (2017) investigated the use of e-resources among postgraduate students in the social sciences at the University of Hong Kong. The results indicated that students frequently used e-resources, particularly online databases and electronic journals, for their research and learning activities. The study also highlighted the importance of library support and user education programs in enhancing the effective use of e-resources. Sinha and Chanda (2014) has describes about the usage of E-Resources available under the UGC-INFONET Digital Library Consortium and DeLCON Consortium by the scientific community Library Users of Assam University, Silchar representing from Bio-Medical Sciences and Ecology and Environmental Sciences. Sarasvathy and Namavalli (2013) conducted research on the use of e-resources by postgraduate students in the Faculty of Arts at Annamalai University. The study found that while students were aware of e-resources, their utilization was relatively low, and they faced challenges related to accessibility and lack of training. A study by Dhanavandan and Tamizhchelvan (2012) examined the use of e-resources

by postgraduate students at Annamalai University, India. The findings revealed a high level of awareness and usage of e-resources, with the majority of students using them for research and academic purposes.In the Indian context, Madhusudhan (2010) explored the use of e-resources by postgraduate students at the University of Delhi.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a survey-based approach to collect data from postgraduate students in the Faculty of Social Sciences at Barkatullah University, Bhopal.The target population for this study comprised all postgraduate students enrolled in various departments within the Faculty of Social Sciences at Barkatullah University, Bhopal. A sample of 110 postgraduate students was selected using a stratified random sampling technique, ensuring representation from different departments.A structured questionnaire was developed and distributed to the selected 110 postgraduate students. The questionnaire included both closed and open-ended questions to collect information. Responses were received from 106 out of 110 students.

Analysis and Interpretation

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Gender Distribution of Respondent

The sample comprised 110 postgraduate students, of whom 106 respondents completed and returned the questionnaire. The response rate was 96%, with 62% being female and 38% male respondents (Figure 1).
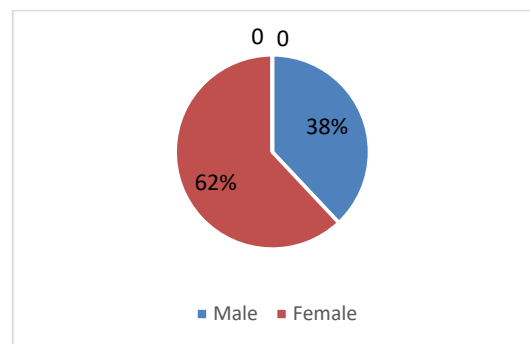

Fig. 1: Gender distribution of Respondent

Age group of Respondent

The data reveals significant insights into the usage and preferences of electronic resources among postgraduate

students in the Faculty of Social Sciences (Table-1). The majority of respondents (67%) belong to the age group of 22 to 25 years, indicating a youthful demographic engaged in higher education.

Table 1: Age group of Respondent

Age group	Percent (%)
22-25 yrs.	61 %
25-28 yrs.	21 %
29-30 yrs.	11 %
More than 30 yrs.	7 %

Awareness and Utilization of E-Resources

Awareness of e-Resources

The study found that 83% of the respondents were aware of the use of e-resources. They know how to use e-resources for their studies and what is its utility (Fig.2). A high level of awareness regarding e-resources is evident, with 83% of the respondents knowledgeable about their utility and usage, suggesting that students are well-informed about digital tools available for academic purposes.
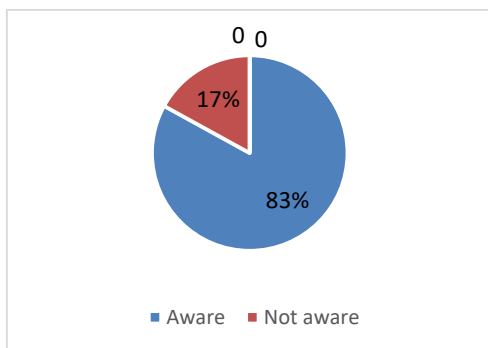

Fig. 2: Awareness of e-Resources

Priority in the use of e resources

Table 2 shows that in the use of electronic resources by PG students, 41% users prefer e-book, 26% users prefer e-journal/e-magazine/newspapers,6% users prefer Database,14% users prefer e-thesis and e-dissertation, and 13% users prefer other types of e-resources. The analysis of preferences in electronic resources indicates that e-books (41%) are the most favored by postgraduate students, while e-journals, although preferred by research scholars and faculty, are the second choice for this demographic (26%). This distinction highlights a divergence in resource preferences based on academic level, with PG students leaning towards e-books for their studies.

Table 2: Priority in the use of e resources

Sl.No.	Priority in use of digital/internet resources	Percent(%)
1.	e-books	41%
2.	e-Journals	26%
3.	Database	6%
3.	e-Theses/ Dissertations	14%
4.	Others	13%

Priority in the purpose for using e-resources

In terms of priority of using e-resources, 46% students prefer to use e-resources for course related studies, 38% for assignment/project work, only 4% for research work and 12% for other works (Table-3). Furthermore, the priority for using e-resources reveals that a significant proportion (46%) of students use these tools primarily for course-related studies, followed by assignment and project work (38%). This emphasizes the role of e-resources in supporting academic coursework rather than research activities, which only 4% of students prioritize.

Table 3: Priority in the purpose for using e-resources

Uses	Percent(%)
Study related to curriculum	46%
Research Work	4%
Assignment/project completion	38%
Other	12%

Reasons for giving priority to e-resources over printed resources

Table number 4 show the reasons for giving preference to electronic resources over printed (traditional) documents. The reasons for favoring electronic resources over traditional printed documents show that time-saving is the leading factor (30%), followed by the informative nature of e-resources (29%). Cost-effectiveness (17%), user satisfaction (14%), and reliability (7%) also contribute to students' preferences, though to a lesser extent.

Table 3: Reasons for giving priority to e-resources over printed resources

Sl.No.	Benefits of Printed Material	Percent(%)
1.	Reliability	30
2.	Cost-Effective	29
3.	Time Saving	17
4.	Informative	14
5.	Satisfaction	7

Important Findings

The majority of respondents (67%) are aged between 22 and 25 years, indicating a youthful and academically active population in the Faculty of Social Sciences.

A significant 83% of respondents are aware of how to use electronic resources, suggesting a strong familiarity with digital academic tools.

E-books are the most preferred electronic resource among postgraduate students (41%).

E-journals, while favored by faculty and research scholars, are the second choice for students (26%).

The primary use of e-resources is for course-related studies (46%), followed by assignments and project work (38%).

Only a small percentage (4%) prioritize e-resources for research purposes.

Time-saving is the most cited reason for preferring electronic resources (30%).

Informative content (29%) and cost-effectiveness (17%) are also significant factors, while reliability (7%) is the least emphasized reason.

These findings highlight the importance of e-resources in supporting the academic needs of postgraduate students while also indicating areas where further emphasis on research-oriented usage and training could enhance their academic experience.

Barriers and Challenges

The postgraduate students reported several barriers and challenges in accessing and utilizing e-resources:

Lack of Awareness: Many students were not fully aware of the e-resources available at the university, as well as the procedures for accessing them.

Inadequate Training: The respondents expressed a need for more training and guidance on the effective use of e-resources for research and academic purposes.

Technological Constraints: Issues related to internet connectivity, slow download speeds, and the availability of necessary hardware were major challenges faced by the students.

Limited Access: Some students reported limited access to e-resources due to subscription-based models or restricted off-campus access.

Recommendation and Suggestions

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed to improve the use and integration of e-resources in the Faculty of Social Sciences at Barkatullah University, Bhopal:

Enhance Awareness and Promotion: The university should organize regular awareness campaigns, workshops, and user education programs to inform postgraduate students about the available e-resources and their benefits.

Improve Infrastructure and Technical Support: The university should invest in upgrading the ICT infrastructure, ensuring reliable internet connectivity and access to e-resources, both on-campus and off-campus.

Provide Targeted Training: The university should design and implement comprehensive training programs to equip postgraduate students with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively utilize e-resources for their academic and research activities.

Expand E-Resource Collection: The university should continuously expand and update its e-resource collection, based on the needs and feedback of postgraduate students, to ensure the availability of relevant and high-quality content.

Encourage Faculty Involvement: Faculty members should be encouraged to integrate e-resources into their teaching and research practices, setting an example for postgraduate students and promoting their effective utilization.

Develop Policies and Strategies: The university should formulate clear policies and strategies for the management and promotion of e-resources, ensuring their optimal utilization by the postgraduate students.

Conclusion

The study has provided valuable insights into the use and awareness of e-resources among postgraduate students in the Faculty of Social Sciences at Barkatullah University, Bhopal. While the level of awareness is moderate, the utilization of e-resources is still relatively limited, due to various factors such as accessibility, relevance of content, and lack of training. The findings of this study emphasize the need for targeted interventions to enhance the integration of e-resources in the academic and research activities of postgraduate students. By addressing the identified barriers and challenges, and implementing the recommended strategies, the university can foster a more effective and

efficient digital learning environment, ultimately supporting the scholarly pursuits of postgraduate students in the Faculty of Social Sciences.This study aims to fill this gap and contribute to the understanding of e-resource utilization in the local context.

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