

EVALUATION OF INFORMATION LITERACY SKILLS AMONG THE UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF RURAL AREAS: A CASE STUDY OF CCS HARYANA AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY, HISAR

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The present study explores the information literacy perceptions of undergraduate students, particularly who are come from rural areas to get higher education in the subject of agricultural sciences at Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University (CCS HAU), Hisar. A questionnaire based survey has been conducted in the University to assess the information literacy status among the targeted group. The copies of well structured questionnaire have been distributed among the 200 undergraduate students during September-October 2019, out of which, 157 have been responded positively, and hence, overall response rate *i.e.* 78.5% has been achieved. The overall results demonstrated that the perception of undergraduate students was moderate towards the evaluation of information, literacy, ethics and other related issues in era of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) or social media.

Keywords: Information Literacy, ICT, Social Media, Undergraduate Students, Evaluation, Agricultural University, Rural Students

INTRODUCTION

Generally, Literacy is associated with the ability to find, read, write and evaluate the information effectively. Further, literacy can be expanded by the means of ability to use language, extracting information from various types of information resources available in print or in electronic format, and to evaluate the information or resources critically. In 1974, Paul G. Zurkowski has introduced the concept of “Information Literacy”. Zurkowski elaborated “people trained in the application of information resources to their work can be called information literates. They have learned techniques and skills for utilizing the wide range of information tools as well as primary sources in molding information solutions to their problems” (Zurkowski, 1974). American Library Association (1989) defined information literacy a “set of abilities requiring individuals to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information”. Swapna and Biradar (2017) explained Information Literacy (IL) very nicely in their study that “it is a set of skills, which includes finding information effectively, managing the abundance of information

available effectively, thinking critically about information sources, synthesizing and incorporating information into one's knowledge base, creatively expressing and effectively communicating new knowledge, using information legally and ethically, and using knowledge for the betterment of the individual's life and also of the society". In every walk of life, information literacy empowers the peoples to seek, create, use and evaluate information effectively according to their requirements and make them able to fulfil their personal, educational or social goals. If the peoples be information literate, they can make themselves informed citizens and could also pay their positive role in the development of society as well as of the country.

In this era of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and World Wide Web (WWW), the way of generating and accessing the information has totally changed. Due to information explosion, rapidly changes in format of information resources and learning styles, the students particularly belonging to rural area of India are facing various problems such as they are not able to authenticate and validate information resources during their searching and using information of their necessity. The investigator felt that it is important to explore the level of ICT and information literacy skills among the undergraduate students of rural areas of Haryana State of India. Therefore, the present study has been carried out to assess the information literacy skills of the undergraduate students who are coming from rural areas for studying in CCS Haryana Agricultural University, Hisar.

CCS HARYANA AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY, HISAR

"After the division of Punjab State, the first established university in Haryana State in 1970 was Haryana Agricultural University, which is one of the Asia's biggest agricultural universities. In 1991, it was renamed after India's seventh Prime Minister Chaudhary Charan Singh. Thus, now it is known as Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University, Hisar. The university covers an area of 8645 Acres, out of which, 7219 acres at main campus and 1426 acres at sub-campuses" (CCS HAU, 2019). Further, it is to mention here that the University has offered various courses in agricultural sciences, home sciences, fisheries science, biotechnology and other allied sciences on bachelor, master and doctoral level to more than 2,300 students.

"The library (Nehru Library) of CCS HAU, Hisar was establishment in 1948 with the establishment of College of Veterinary Sciences. In the year 1975 it was named after Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India. Nehru Library of CCS HAU, Hisar have a great reputation among the agricultural sciences universities in India. The covered area of the building is 9076 m² with a capacity to accommodate more than 3.5 lacs books and bound journals" (CCS HAU, 2019).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Review of literature forms the basis for any study to understand the basic concept related to concerned topic of study. For the present study, various e-databases, repositories, open access resources available on Internet, books, conference proceedings and journals in the field

of library and information science have been reviewed to clear the concept and trend in information literacy skills during the last decade, *i.e.*, between 2011 and 2021. It is not possible to trace all the relevant literature on the topic so some of the relevant studies have been discussed herewith as follows:

Sasikala and Dhanraju (2011) conducted a study to assess the information literacy skills among science students of Andhra University and found that the level of awareness about the library catalogue among majority of the students was satisfactory, whereas, the majority of the respondents do not have the proper skills related to identify their actual information need and to search the catalogue under the appropriate access point. A study was conducted by Parvathamma and Danappa (2013) to know the digital literacy among the students' community in management institutes in Davanagere district of Karnataka State and found that the students were conversant with the web 2.0 based services but they were using these services mainly for their personal use, while only 02.96% of the students were familiar with the 'Indiastat' database, which is one of India's comprehensive statistical information portal that provides recent, exhaustive, authentic socio-economic statistical analysis and yearly data. While studying the awareness of information literacy among undergraduate students of Paritala Sriramulu Government Degree College, Penukonda in Andhra Pradesh, Keshalu and Srinivasulu (2016) noticed that majority of the respondents didn't have their e-mail accounts and also were not aware that which type of facilities and services are available on Internet, while 44% of the respondents were not aware about the

concept of Information Literacy (IL). Swapna and Biradar (2017) conducted a study to assess the information literacy skills among science-post graduate students in universities of Karnataka state and found that more than 74% of the respondents were able to use the different information search and retrieval tools or systems, while on an average 63% of the respondents were able to determine the cost and benefit of acquiring information sources and evaluate the information sources effectively.

Aftab and Singh (2018) conducted a study at Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh to explore the information literacy among the postgraduate students and research scholars of social science faculty and found that majority of the PG students and research scholars were lagging behind in the use of many library sources and services, and even didn't have the capacity to use the e-resources effectively. However, PG students had low level of information literacy skills as compared to research scholars. On the other hand, Alagu and Thanuskodi (2018) had tried to assess the information literacy skills among the students of Alagappa University, India and observed that the majority of the students were accessing Internet in University Central Library and the maximum number of students were using various information resources to enhance their knowledge and prepare themselves for participating in the seminar or conference and writing a article for a journal. Whereas, the researchers also analysed that the lack of electricity was the prime barriers to the use of the computer by university library users. Vijay Pratap and Kunwar Singh (2018) conducted a study to know the digital literacy skills among

students and research scholars of the Law School, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi and noticed that majority of the students and research scholars (86.67%) used digital resources daily to update their subject knowledge in the concerned field and for most of the respondents, the preferred location to access digital resources was the hostel (37.41%).

To explore the digital information literacy skills of Mangalore University students, a study was conducted by Lokesha and Adithya (2019) and observed that 83.33% of the respondents were admitted that they need digital resources to update their subject knowledge followed by the statements, *i.e.*, ‘to prepare for seminar papers’ (66.67%), ‘to prepare their study notes’ (63.33%), ‘to prepare for competitive exams’ (60%), ‘to carry out projects / dissertations’ (56.67%) and ‘to write for assignments’ (43.33%) respectively, whereas, a majority of the respondents, *i.e.*, 93% had the knowledge of digital library infrastructure facility. Neogi and Bhanu Partap (2019) conducted a study at Uttarayan College of Education, Cooch Behar (WB) to evaluate the role of information literacy skills on the use of information resources by the future teachers and found that almost 70% of the respondents had Internet literacy, 66% had media literacy and 65% had computer literacy, while more than 45% of the respondents were agreed upon that there is a relation between information literacy skills and use of information resources as it enhances information use skills among them. Likewise, a study was conducted to assess the information literacy skills of final year undergraduates of library and information science (LIS) in Nigerian universities by *Okeji et al.* (2020) revealed that

almost half of the final year undergraduates of LIS rated their level of information literacy skills to be moderate, while to organize information and integrate ideas from consulted information, all the students rated their ability as high.

Thus, from the studies reviewed above, it could be stated that the respondents in almost all the studies were lacking in various aspects of information literacy. There are too many studies conducted in India as well as foreign countries to evaluate the information literacy skills but to know the information literacy skills/level of rural students studying in agricultural universities across India, no study has been found. The present study is therefore planned to fill this gap.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Today is the era of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and the role of ICT is very crucial in every aspect of human endeavour. Similarly, in academia, application of social media nowadays gives impact on teaching, research, extension and other areas. Applications of social media is now a common way of communication between the students and teachers or authority as well. Therefore, it is assumed that everyone should be well versed in using ICT applications or social media and for this; it is needed to be information literate. Information literacy involves the abilities to recognize the best use of information according to situation and time need. However, it is assumed that the students who belongs to rural area are not much information literate. Hence, a study was planned to know the level of information literacy of undergraduate students who are coming from rural areas to get higher education from CCS Haryana Agricultural University, Hisar.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following objectives of the study were intended to be achieved:

1. To find out the various purposes of using the library;
2. To find out the various information needs of the undergraduate students;
3. To know the various type of information resources used by the respondents;
4. To identify the level of information literacy skills in various fields/areas among the undergraduate students;
5. To know the awareness about social media among the respondents;
6. To identify the use and impact of social media on various aspects of the respondents; and
7. To find out the various areas where information literacy programs are needed by the respondents

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

The present study intends to find out the level of information literacy among the undergraduate students of CCS HAU, Hisar. The study is limited to the undergraduate students who belongs to rural areas only. Only the students who were studying in the main campus of the University were included in the study and the students who were studying in offshoot campuses within Haryana state were excluded from the study.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As per the objectives of the study and extensive literature review, the survey method was adopted for the present study. A well structured questionnaire was designed as a tool for data collection. The data were collected during

September-October 2019. In the month of September 2019, the questionnaires were distributed among 200 undergraduate students who belongs to rural areas. Out of 200 respondents, only 157 respondents were responded completely by filling the questionnaires properly, which forms the overall response rate @78.5% and the collected data have been tabulated, analysed and interpreted by using simple percentage analysis method.

DATA ANALYSIS

After collecting the data, the next step is the analysis and interpretation of the data. The collected data has been carefully and critically analysed, tabulated and interpreted using simple percentage method. The analysis of data as per the objectives of the study is presented in the following tables:

The Table 1 shows the gender wise distribution of respondents and it is revealed that 56.68% of the respondents were male and 43.32% were female, who participated positively in this study. It is clear from the study that male students from rural areas were more interested to join agricultural education as compared to female students.

Table 1: Gender wise distribution of respondents

Gender	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Male	89	56.68
Female	68	43.32
Total	157	100

Frequency of library visit

Frequency of library visit by the respondents is highlighted in the Table 2 and it was noticed

that more than one fourth (27.37%) of the respondents were using the library once in a week, while 24.84% respondents visited the library occasionally. On the other hand, 17.84% of the respondents visited the library once in a fortnight, followed by once in a month (14.64%) and everyday (13.57%) respectively. This trend shows that most of the undergraduate students were not preferred to visit and use the library everyday or frequently, as they informed during the survey that they were very busy in their regular classes as well as in field work.

Table 2: Frequency of library visit

Frequency	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Everyday	21	13.57
Once in a week	43	27.37
Fortnightly	28	17.84
Monthly	23	14.64
Occasionally	39	24.84
Never	03	01.92
Total	157	100

Purpose of library visit

The data given in the Table 3 represent the various purposes of undergraduate students for visiting the library and it was found that maximum number (52.86%) of the respondents were visit the library to issue or return the books, while 16.56% of the respondents visited the library to access the Internet facility. On the other hand, 11.46% of the respondents visited the library for the purpose of reading books, followed by the purposes of consulting reference resources (10.20%), reading newspapers (05.74%) and for pass time (03.18%) respectively

Table 3: Purpose of library visit

Purpose	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Issue/Return books	83	52.86
Reading newspapers	09	05.74
Reading books	18	11.46
Consulting reference resources	16	10.20
Browsing Internet	26	16.56
Pass time	05	03.18
Total	157	100

Areas of literacy and level of students

The Table 4 shows the various areas of literacy in which undergraduate students were having some literacy skills as they claimed during the survey. It was observed that half of the respondents had computer literacy, whereas, 36.94% of the respondents had Internet literacy and 30.58% had media literacy, which had also include proficiency in using social media applications, followed by the information literacy (24.20%), library software literacy (14.64%) and digital literacy (12.74%) respectively. The results shows that the undergraduate students who are coming from rural areas for acquiring higher education having some literacy skills in various areas as it is to be consider that this is the era of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and social media.

Table 4: Areas of literacy and level of students

Literacy	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Computer literacy	79	50.32
Internet literacy	58	36.94
Library software literacy	23	14.64
Information literacy	38	24.20
Digital literacy	20	12.74
Media literacy (Including social media)	48	30.58

Note: Multiple answers permitted

Information needs

Various type of needs for seeking information by the respondents are highlighted in the Table 5 and it is evident from the data given in table that 42.68% of the respondents were seeking information from the library to prepare their class assignments, whereas, 27.39% of the respondents admitted that they need information to prepare study notes for examination. On the other hand, 15.92% of the respondents responded that they need information to update core knowledge in their subject area, followed by for preparing debate competitions (09.56%) and for research work (04.45%) respectively. It is clear from the table that main focus of maximum number of respondents (undergraduate students) to visit the library and seeking information is to prepare their class assignments or study notes for examination purpose.

Table 5: Information Needs

Information needs	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
To prepare assignments	67	42.68
To update core knowledge	25	15.92
For research work	07	04.45
For preparing debate competitions	15	09.56
To prepare study notes for examination	43	27.39
Total	157	100

Consultation of Information resources

The Table 6 shows the various types of information resources, which are preferred to consult by the respondents while seeking their required information during their visit to the library. It was noticed that books (57.32%) were the main information source for the respondents,

while 26.12% of the respondents prefer to use Internet for exploring their desired information. On the other hand, e-resources were being used by 12.10% respondents, while journals were being used by 04.46% respondents for their required information. This trend shows that books are still preferred by the undergraduate students for seeking their desired academic, research or other information as compared to other information resources.

Table 6 : Consultation of Information resources

Information resources	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Books	90	57.32
Journals	07	04.46
E-resources	19	12.10
Internet	41	26.12
Total	157	100

Awareness and relevance of social media

The data given in the Ttable 7 represents the awareness and relevance of social media among the respondents and it was found that all the respondents covered under the study were aware and using the various applications of social media. However, it is evident from the data given in table that 33.12% of the respondents were using the social media for sharing of non-academic information, whereas, 22.30% respondents were using social media for sharing academic information, followed by entertainment purpose (17.84%), building social relations (14.64%) and research related work (12.10%) respectively. It is clear from the above discussions that most of the undergraduate students were using social media for non-academic purposes.

Table 7: Awareness and relevance of social media

Awareness and relevance	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Academics	35	22.30
Non-academics	52	33.12
Research related	19	12.10
Entertainment	28	17.84
Building social relations	23	14.64
Total	157	100

Use and Impact of Social Media

It is evident from the data given in the Table 8 that 43.94% of the respondents were using social media applications for sharing general nature of information, whereas, 22.93% respondents were using social media for leisure purpose or pass time. On the other hand, 17.20% of the respondents were using the social media for sharing class time table and other related activities, while 15.93% respondents were using for sharing academic and research related information. This impact shows that maximum numbers of respondents were using social media for sharing general or non-academic information.

Table 8: Use and Impact of Social Media

Use and impact	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Sharing general information	69	43.94
Sharing academic and research related information	25	15.93
For leisure purpose	36	22.93
For class time table and activities	27	17.20
Total	157	100

Need of information literacy programs

The Table 9 shows the views of respondents on need of information literacy programs and it

is observed that majority of the respondents, *i.e.*, 75.16% agreed that there is a need to organize information literacy programs on different level for the respondents from time to time, particularly for those students, who are coming from rural areas to get higher education, while 24.84% of the respondents responded that there is no need to organize such type of programs as it is assumed that new or young generation has some literacy skills regarding computers and applications of social media.

Table 9: Need of information literacy programs

Need	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	118	75.16
No	39	24.84
Total	157	100

Areas where information literacy programs are required

The data given in the Table 10 highlights the various areas, where information literacy programs could be conducted as per the need of the respondents. It is evident from the data given in above table that 28.02% of the respondents were interested to join literacy programs in use of e-resources, whereas, 25.49% respondents shown their keen interest in the use of library OPAC / Web-OPAC, followed by the use of social media applications purposefully (24.85%), use of Internet (14.64%) and the use of print resources (07.00%) respectively.

Table 10: Areas where information literacy programs are required

Areas of information literacy	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Use of social media applications purposefully	39	24.85
Use of Internet	23	14.64
Use of e-resources	44	28.02
Use of print resources	11	07.00
Library OPAC/Web-OPAC	40	25.49
Total	157	100

CONCLUSIONS, SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has changed the way of thinking, working pattern and style of life. Similarly, applications of social media have drastically changed the way of sharing information, building relationship and academic & non-academic sphere. Therefore, it is expected that everyone should be information literate so that they may able to use the information or resources in effective way and get benefitted themselves as well as society or area of concerned. In the present study, on the basis of data analysis and observations, it can be concluded that the undergraduate students who are coming from rural areas to get higher education in the subject of agricultural sciences from Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University, Hisar (CCS HAU) have moderate information literacy skills to find, use and share their required information in this era of ICT and social media. However, the respondents expected from the authorities of the University to conduct the information literacy programs on different levels from time to time so that they may update themselves and enhance their skills to use the required information effectively. Therefore, it is recommended that various training programs,

orientation programs, workshops, seminars or similar type of other programs according to the needs of the rural students should be conducted on regular basis so that they enhance their level of information literacy skills. Further, it is also recommended that information literacy programme on various level should be integrated with the teaching and learning process of the University. For that, special theory and practical classes on weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis should be inclusive in the scheduled time table.

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