

INFORMATION LITERACY AMONG FEMALE POST-GRADUATE STUDENTS OF GULBARGA UNIVERSITY, KALABURAGI, KARNATAKA: A STUDY

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Information literacy is a set of abilities enabling individuals to recognize the need for information and to have the ability to locate, evaluate and use of needed information effectively and efficiently. With this point in view, the present study assesses the Information literacy competencies among the Female postgraduate students of Gulbarga University, Kalaburagi. The main objective of the study was to determine the student's information literacy competencies such as, ability to access required information, ability to identify their awareness about different information resources, search strategies, ability to evaluate information and also to ascertain the student's awareness regarding the fair use of information. The findings of the study revealed that majority of the respondents, i.e. 62 (51.23%) can differentiate primary, secondary and tertiary sources of information and their importance, 64 (52.89%) prefer to use both e-resources and printed sources, 93 (76.85%) respondents prefer to use simple keywords, 75 (61.98%) respondents have the basic knowledge of computer and its applications and 117 (96.69%) respondents opine that they need training on information literacy, 64 (52.89%) respondents agreed that information literacy must be integrated in their curriculum.

Keywords: Information literacy skills/competencies, Postgraduate students, Universities, Gulbarga University

INTRODUCTION

Since the dawn of the 21st century, enormous developments and advancements have taken place due to the convergence of communication technologies affecting every segment of the society. Moreover, a tremendous amount of information is being generated day by day in various formats. As an outcome, individuals are baffled by the abundance of diverse choices of information resources available for finding solutions to their problems. In such a situation, the acquisition of required information and technology skills is becoming increasingly important to the individuals in order to become an effective information user. Therefore, such skills are apparently becoming a “survival skills” in the present information age.

Drastic developments in new technologies and simultaneously increase in information resources have led to the greater need for information literacy competencies for every student to be competent in the present fast changing world.

The term *information literacy* was coined by Paul Zurkowski in 1974. According to Zurkowski information literate people are able to recognize when information is needed. They are also able to identify, locate, evaluate, and use the information to solve a particular problem (ALA, 1989). Bruce (1999) defines IL as a “person’s ability to operate effectively in an information society”. According to ACRL (2000) an information literate individual is able to determine the extent of information needed, access the needed information effectively and efficiently, evaluate information and its sources critically, incorporate selected information into one’s knowledge base, use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose, understand the economic, legal and social issues surrounding the use of information and access and use information ethically and legally. The only difference between ALA and ACRL definition is that, instead of recognizing when information is needed, the student here ‘determines the nature and extent’ of their need. Johnston and Webber (2003) provide the definition of information literacy as “Information literacy is the adoption of appropriate information behavior to obtain, through whatever channel or medium, information well fitted to information needs, together with a critical awareness of the importance of wise and ethical use of information in society”.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

The central theme of higher education institutions is to develop lifelong learners with the intellectual abilities of reasoning and critical thinking. Gaining competencies in information literacy multiply the opportunities for students to become self-directed and independent learning, as they become engaged to use the wide variety of information sources. It also empowers the individuals in all walks of life with required knowledge about needed information, its nature and available formats, skills to fetch the relevant information, attitudes and capabilities in managing, organizing, sharing information and knowledge with acknowledging ethical, legal and social issues surrounding the use of information to accomplish a specific purpose. Thus, information literacy competencies are required as the basis for lifelong learning which enables learners to master content and helps to become a self-directed independent learners.

In the current digital era, the pace of ICT development and its impact on information sources is indeed tremendous. Therefore, it is vital for students of universities to keep abreast of knowledge on information literacy competencies. Hence, the present study is an attempt to assess the Information Literacy competencies among female postgraduate students to know their skills of identifying, locating, searching, retrieving, evaluating and using of information effectively.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Researchers have investigated the level of research competencies among undergraduate,

postgraduate and research students. For instance, Rehman and Alfaresi (2009) studied Information literacy skills among female students in Kuwait high schools. The results reveals that majority of Kuwaiti high school students lacked skills in catalog searching and use, selection of information sources, formulation of search strategies, and selection of pertinent sources. Conway (2011) studied information literacy skills among undergraduate and postgraduate student's information studies students at Curin University. The results reveal that, students have problems with basic information literacy skills, particularly with the use of traditional library tools and lack of basic skills required to locate documents in the course of their studies. Kaur and Rani (2012) analyzed the information literacy skills among postgraduate students and research scholars at Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar and observed that usage of Boolean operators and meta-searching was just 31.6% and 17.6% respectively. However, the usage of wildcard/truncation was the least satisfactory. Overall, only one-fourth of respondents were able to identify the citations. Nevertheless, nearly half of the users were aware regarding the fair use of information.

Mahajan and Kumar (2014) assess the basic information literacy competency and the perception of information literacy behavior of post-graduate students and research scholars at Panjab University, Chandigarh. The study found that students require competency to solve information related problems. Ilogho and Nkiko (2014) investigated the knowledge of information literacy search skills of students in five private universities at Ogun state in Nigeria. The research

reveals that students had limited knowledge about information skills particularly in identifying diverse information sources. The study urged the incorporation of an extensive information literacy programme in the course curriculum to help students to become information literate. Okpala et al. (2017) studied to know the various information literacy skills possessed by postgraduate students of University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Findings reveals that most of the postgraduate students were knowledgeable in basic information literacy skills such as use of search engines, use of social media for research, online referencing tools and also found that none of the students are knowledgeable about research ethics related to plagiarism. In addition, the study revealed that they are in need of the information literacy skills related to research writing skills and knowledge about building online community.

Aftab (2018) conducted a study on Information literacy among postgraduate students and research scholars of Social science faculty at Aligarh Muslim University. The results disclosed that the maximum number of the respondents visit the library to borrow/return the books and are the most frequently used source of information. It is also found that, majority of the respondents are not acquainted with the use of encyclopedia and journals. Similarly, Israel (2018) assessed the information literacy skills of LIS postgraduate students at the Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The study shows that respondents' ability to create content in blogs, YouTube, and personal webpages for different audiences were found to be less in number. Therefore, authors advocate the urgent need to

improve postgraduate students' publishing literacy skills to enable them to possess the needed skills to format and publish research ideas in textual and multimedia formats as well as to be able to create content in blogs, YouTube, and personal webpages for different audiences. Akpovire et al. (2019) investigate the role of information literacy skills on the use of information resources by medical students in Lagos state. Majority of the students use information resources for research purposes, assignment, writing projects, to prepare for exams and test, for reading and personal development, to supplement lecture notes, as reference sources and to know what has been done in the field of research in their subject areas. Singh and Joshi (2019) assessed the information literacy competency of postgraduate students at Haryana Agricultural University, Hisar. The results reveal that Information literacy competency satisfaction was low. An in depth review of literature suggest that students of higher education are yet to make efforts to acquire information literacy skills, and hence this study will contribute to knowledge in this regard. Thus, the present study is an attempt to assess the basic information literacy skills among Female postgraduate students only.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To ascertain the awareness of different information resources among the respondents;
2. To examine the information search strategies adopted by the respondents;
3. To ascertain awareness among respondents about the legal and ethical use of Information;

4. To know the ICT literacy skills of the respondents;
5. To know the problems of respondents while accessing the information resources;
6. To know the preferred mode of Information literacy programme by the respondents; and
7. To know the opinion of the respondents on the need for training on Information skills.

METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The survey method was adopted for data collection and questionnaire was designed based on the ACRL's Information literacy standards for Higher education (ACRL, 2000). The total population of female postgraduate students of Gulbarga University was 1380. The sample size for female Postgraduate students is 138 i.e. 10% of the total population. Around 140 questionnaires were distributed to the students to collect the data. Among 140 students, 121 have responded with a response rate of 86.42%. The scope of the present study is confined to only Female postgraduate students of Gulbarga University, Kalaburagi. Data analysis and interpretation are entirely based on the feedback received from the respondents. The same has been systematically analyzed and presented in the following sections.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Demographic information about the respondents

The table 1 reveals that, majority of the respondents, i.e. 65 (53.73%) belongs to the age

group of between 20 and 22, followed by 52 (42.97%) respondents belong to the age group of 23 and 25, and very less number of respondents i.e. 4 (3.30%) belong to the category of more than 26 and above age group.

Table 1: Age-wise distribution of the respondents

Age group	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
20-22	65	53.73
23-25	52	42.97
26 and above	4	3.30
Total	121	100

Frequency of visit to the University Library

An attempt has been made to obtain information on how frequently the respondents visit the university library in the course of their study. The table 2 reveals that among 121 respondents, 41 (33.88%) respondents visit the library rarely followed by 33 (27.27%) respondents visit the library almost once in a week and 21(17.35%) respondents are found to be visiting the library everyday and less number of respondents i.e. 12 (9.91%) respondents visit once in a month. Further, 8 (6.61%) respondents stated 'not at all' which indicates that these

Table 2: Frequency of visit to the University library by the respondents

Library Visit	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Every day	21	17.35
Once in week	33	27.27
Once in fortnight	6	4.95
Once in month	12	9.91
Rarely	41	33.8
Not at all	8	6.61
Total	121	100

respondents never visit library. Thus, the data shows that on average, majority of the respondents visit the library either rarely or once in a week.

Ability to access the Information

The table 3 highlights the opinion of students on their abilities to access the information. It is clearly observed that, out of 121 respondents, 36 (29.75%) strongly agreed and 80 (66.11%) respondents agreed with the statement that they can identify their information needs, followed by 24 (19.83%) respondents agreed and 80 (66.11%) respondents strongly agreed to the statement that they can formulate questions based on their specific information need. Further, 45 (37.19%) respondents strongly agreed with the statement that they know how to locate information sources within the library and more number of respondents i.e. 51 (42.14%) stated Don't know for the same statement. In addition, more than half of the respondents i.e. 65 (53.71%) agreed that they use alternative methods for procuring information resources which they cannot find in the library.

Ability to identify different sources of Information

The table 4 highlights the opinion of students on their abilities to identify the different sources of information. It is observed that, majority of the respondents i.e. 62 (51.23%) agreed and 28 (23.14%) respondents strongly agreed to the statement that they can differentiate between primary, secondary and tertiary sources of information and their importance, followed by 87 (71.90%) respondents agreed that they can identify different types of potential sources of information. Further, 28 (23.14%) respondents agreed to the statement that they can identify the

Table 3: Respondents' opinion on their ability to access the Information

Statements	SA	Ag	DK	DA	SD
I can identify my information needs	36 (29.75)	80 (66.11)	5 (4.13)	00 (00)	00 (00)
I can formulate questions based on specific information need	24 (19.83)	80 (66.11)	15 (12.39)	2 (1.65)	00 (00)
I know how to locate information sources within the library	19 (15.70)	45 (37.19)	51 (42.14)	6 (4.95)	00 (00)
I use alternative methods for procuring information resources which I cannot find in the library.	16 (13.22)	65 (53.71)	17 (14.04)	23 (19.00)	00 (00)

*SA-Strongly agree; Ag-Agree; DK-Don't know; DA- Disagree; SD- Strongly disagree

Table 4: Respondent's opinion about ability to identify different sources of Information

Statements	SA	Ag	DK	DA	SD
I can differentiate primary and secondary sources of information and determine their importance	28 (23.14)	62 (51.23)	26 (21.48)	3 (2.47)	2 (1.65)
I can identify different types of potential sources of information	16 (13.22)	87 (71.90)	7 (5.78)	11 (9.09)	00 (00)
I can identify the information resources of popular or scholarly, current or historical etc.	13 (10.74)	28 (23.14)	74 (61.15)	6 (4.95)	00 (00)
I know the difference between a peer reviewed journal and popular magazine	21 (17.35)	20 (16.52)	70 (57.85)	6 (4.95)	4 (3.30)
I use more e-resources than the printed sources of information	22 (18.18)	64 (52.89)	11 (9.09)	24 (19.83)	00 (00)
I know the difference between full text and abstract of the article	23 (19.00)	14 (11.57)	76 (62.80)	8 (6.61)	00 (00)

*SA-Strongly agree; Ag-Agree; DK-Don't know; DA- Disagree; SD- Strongly disagree

information resources which are popular, scholarly, current or historical and more number of respondents i.e. 74 (61.15 %) stated Don't know for the same statement and 70 (57.85%) stated don't know to differentiate between peer-reviewed journal and popular magazines. In addition, 64 (52.89%) respondents stated agreed to the statement that they use more e-resources than the printed sources of information. Around 24 (19.83%) respondents disagreed for the same statement which means they prefer to use printed

sources than the electronic resources. followed by 76 (62.80%) respondents stated don't know to differentiate full text and abstracts.

Ability to evaluate information

An information literate student should be able to evaluate the identified information sources in order to obtain reliable information on a particular topic. The table 5 reveals that, majority of the respondents i.e. 80 (66.11%) agreed and 27 (22.31%) respondents strongly agreed that they

Table 5: Respondents' opinion on the abilities to evaluate information

Statements	SA	Ag	DK	DA	SD
I apply initial criteria for evaluating both information and its sources (to evaluate reliability, accuracy, etc.)	27 (22.31)	80 (66.11)	9 (7.43)	5 (4.13)	00 (00)
I can compare information with various sources to determine unique characteristics of the information	9 (7.43)	69 (57.02)	11 (9.09)	32 (26.44)	00 (00)
I can critically evaluate and identify the key points and arguments in information source	13 (10.74)	68 (56.19)	35 (28.92)	5 (4.13)	00 (00)
I can identify verbatim information present in the text	6 (4.95)	40 (33.05)	11 (9.09)	62 (51.23)	2 (1.65)

*SA-Strongly agree; Ag-Agree; DK-Don't know; DA- Disagree; SD- Strongly disagree

use initial criteria i.e., reliability, accuracy, authority, timeliness for evaluating both information and its sources and 69 (57.02%) respondents agree that they compare the information with various sources to determine the unique characteristics of the information followed by 68 (56.19%) respondents agree that they can critically evaluate and identify the key points and arguments in the information source. In addition, 40 (33.05%) respondents agree that they can identify verbatim information present in the text, followed by more number of respondents i.e. 62 (51.23 %) disagreed for the same statement.

Ability to use of information

The table 6 highlights the respondents' opinion on the abilities to use information. It is observed that, out of 121 respondents, 80 (66.11%) respondents agree that they can restate the text in their own words and present data accurately, followed by 73 (60.33%) respondents agree that they can combine the new and prior information to complete the task. Further, 54 (44.62 %) respondents agree that they can manipulate/convert digital text, images, data to another format, and about 61 (50.41%) respondents agree that they can communicate their work effectively to others.

Table 6: Respondents' opinion on the abilities to use information

Statements	SA	Ag	DK	DA	SD
I can restate the text in own words and present data accurately	22 (18.18)	80 (66.11)	14 (11.57)	5 (4.13)	00 (00)
I can combine the new and prior information to complete the task	17 (14.04)	73 (60.33)	29 (23.96)	2 (1.65)	00 (00)
I can manipulate/convert digital text, images, data to another format	22 (18.18)	54 (44.62)	31 (25.61)	14 (11.57)	00 (00)
I can communicate the product of my work effectively to others	24 (19.83)	61 (50.41)	25 (20.66)	8 (6.61)	3 (2.47)

Ability to use information legally and ethically

The table 7 highlights the respondents' opinion on the abilities to use information legally and ethically. It is observed that, majority of the respondents i.e. 74 (61.15%) disagree to the statement that they know the ethical, legal and socio-economic issues surrounding information and information technology and 26 (21.48 %) respondents stated don't know for the same statement, followed by 44 (36.36%) respondents opine that they don't know to use appropriate citation style to cite sources and 56 (46.28%) respondents disagree for the same statement. In addition, only 16 (13.22%) respondents agree that they seek permission from the copyright holder for using the copyrighted materials, followed by majority i.e. 58 (47.93%) respondents disagree for the same statement.

Use of E-resources

It is found from table 8 that, majority of the respondents i.e. 104 (85.95%) preferred to use e-books and 59 (48.76%) respondents use e-reference sources, followed by 36 (29.75%) respondents use e-thesis and dissertations. 31(25.61%) respondents prefer to use e-journals and 22 (18.18%) respondents opined that they use bibliographic and citation databases. In addition, a very less number of respondents i.e. 17 (14.04%) expressed to use Institutional repositories, and only 11 (9.09%) respondents prefer to use CD-ROM databases.

Information and Communication Technology skills (ICT skills)

The table 9 highlights the opinion of students with the ability to use computer. It indicates that out of 121 respondents, 75 (61.98%) respondents agreed and 41 (33.88%) respondents strongly

Table 7: Respondents' opinion on the abilities to use information legally and ethically

Statements	SA	Ag	DK	DA	SD
I know the ethical and legal issues surrounding information and information technology	14 (11.57)	5 (4.13)	26 (21.48)	74 (61.15)	2 (1.65)
I select appropriate citation style and use it consistently to cite sources	8 (6.61)	13 (10.74)	44 (36.36)	56 (46.28)	00 (00)
I seek permission from the copyright holder for using the copyrighted materials	17 (14.04)	16 (13.22)	28 (23.14)	58 (47.93)	2 (1.65)

*SA-Strongly agree; Ag-Agree; DK-Don't know; DA- Disagree; SD- Strongly disagree

Table 8: Use of E-resources by the respondents

E-resources	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
e –books	104	85.95
e –journals	31	25.61
e-reference sources	59	48.76
Bibliographic and citation databases	22	18.18
e –theses and dissertations	36	29.75
Institutional repositories	17	14.04
CD-ROM databases	11	9.09

agreed for the statement 'I know the basics of computer and functions of hardware components, followed by, 79 (65.28%) respondents agreed that they can retrieve the document using search command to locate the file, 70 (57.85%) respondents agree that they are aware of URL, domain names and IP addresses. Further, 63 (52.06%) respondents agree that they know how to protect information from viruses and digital threats and 27 (22.31%) respondents stated don't know for the same statement, followed by 69 (57.02%) respondents agreed that they can download and use apps on different digital devices. It is observed that majority of the respondents agree for the statements which indicate that respondents have the knowledge to use computer.

Use of search strategies

The table 10 deals with search strategies used by the respondents to find information. Majority of the respondents i.e. 93 (76.85%) use simple keywords, followed by 64 (52.89%) respondents use Boolean operators and nearly half of the respondents i.e. 59 (48.76%) use natural language searching, 52 (42.97%) respondents use field search such as, through the title, URL address. Further, less number of respondents i.e. 42 (34.71%) use advanced search techniques, 25 (20.66%) respondents use controlled vocabulary as a search strategy, followed by other responses i.e. only 13 (10.74%) respondents use truncation and wildcards as search techniques.

Table 9: Respondents' opinion about the use of computer and its application

Statements	SA	Ag	DK	DA	SD
I know the basics of computer and functions of hardware components	41 (33.88)	75 (61.98)	5 (4.13)	00 (00)	00 (00)
I can retrieve the document using 'search' command to locate a file	30 (24.79)	79 (65.28)	12 (9.91)	00 (00)	00 (00)
I am aware of URL, domain names and IP addresses	16 (13.22)	70 (57.85)	31 (25.61)	4 (3.30)	00 (00)
I know how to protect information from viruses and digital threats	22 (18.18)	63 (52.06)	27 (22.31)	4 (3.30)	5 (4.13)
I can download and use apps on different digital devices	22 (18.18)	69 (57.02)	14 (11.57)	16 (13.22)	00 (00)

*SA-Strongly agree; Ag-Agree; DK-Don't know; DA- Disagree; SD- Strongly disagree

Table 10: Use of search strategies by the respondents

Search strategies	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Use of Simple key words	93	76.85
Field search (Title, URL etc.)	52	42.97
Truncation and Wildcards	13	10.74
Use of Boolean Operators	64	52.89
Use controlled vocabulary	25	20.66
Advance search technique	42	34.71
Natural language searching	59	48.76

Problems encountered in searching information

It is found from table 11 that, majority of the respondents i.e. 95 (78.51%) stated that they lack proper guidance, 81 (66.94%) respondents stated about time constraints, followed by other responses i.e. 74 (61.15%) respondents stated poor network connectivity, 63 (50.06%) respondents expressed difficulty to access online resources, 62 (51.23%) respondents felt difficulty in locating the information sources in library and 48 (39.66%) respondents opined that access denied by university to some websites. It clearly indicates that the major problem lies in lack of proper guidance, time constraints and poor network connectivity.

Table 11: Problems encountered by the respondents in searching information

Problems	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Lack proper guidance	95	78.51
Poor network connectivity	74	61.15
Difficulty to access online resources	63	50.06
Difficulty in locating the information sources in library	62	51.23
Access denied by university to some websites	48	39.66
Time constraints	81	66.94

Table 12: Opinion about the need of Information literacy programs by the respondents

Need of Information literacy programs	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	117	96.69
No	4	3.30
Total	121	100

Preferred Mode of Instruction to acquire information literacy skills

The respondents were asked to give their opinion regarding the preferred mode of instruction for acquiring information literacy

Necessity of Information literacy programmness

Information literacy programmes are required to tackle the problems and difficulties encountered by the students. When the respondents were asked about the need for information literacy programs such as training/ orientation/guidance to identify, access and use of information. It is found from table 12 that, out of 121 respondents, 117 (96.69%) respondents opined that they need training, whereas, very less number of respondents i.e. only 4 (3.30%) of respondents felt that they don't need any training on information literacy skills.

skills. The data in table 13 reveals that, majority of the respondents i.e. 117 (96.69%) preferred for seminar / workshops, followed by 86 (71.07%) respondents preferred for training programmes, 76 (62.80%) respondents felt the need for a specific course and 62 (51.23%) respondents preferred audio/video instruction. Further, other respondents preferred remaining modes of instruction i.e. 38 (31.40%) preferred printed information literacy manuals and 34 (28.09%) respondents preferred computer-assisted instructions.

Table 13: Preferred Mode of Instruction by the respondents

Mode of Instruction	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Seminar/ workshops	117	96.69
Training programmes	86	71.07
Specific course	76	62.80
Computer assisted instructions	34	28.09
Printed IL Manuals	38	31.40
Audio/ Video instruction	62	51.23

Information literacy course in the curriculum

It is found from table 14 that, majority of the respondents i.e. 64 (52.89%) agreed and 44 (36.36%) respondents strongly agreed that they need information literacy course in their curriculum on how to use information sources in their subject areas for more effective use of information and to use the library resources. Whereas, only 13 (10.74%) respondents stated uncertain and no respondent disagreed or strongly disagreed with the question asked about the need for information literacy course in curriculum. Thus, it clearly indicates that majority of the respondents agreed to integrate the information literacy course in their curriculum.

Table 14: Respondent's opinion about Information literacy course in the curriculum

Opinion	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	44	36.36
Agree	64	52.89
Uncertain	13	10.74
Disagree	00	00
Strongly Disagree	00	00
Total	121	100

FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

1. It is found from the study that majority of the respondents are aware of only a few search strategies which are not satisfactory. Since the advanced search strategies are important to make use of e-resources it is suggested to the library authorities to provide knowledge on improving the search skills of the respondents through training programs, workshops and information literacy programs.
2. It is observed that knowledge of ICT is essential to access and to handle electronic information resources. Hence, it is necessary for students to get updated with recent technologies. Therefore, it is suggested to the university authorities to organize regular training programs for the students on the latest technologies adopted in the library.
3. Regarding the problems encountered by the postgraduate students, it was observed that respondents are not able to make effective use of library resources due to the lack of proper guidance. Hence, the study suggests to the university authorities and library professionals must provide proper guidance to search for information sources in the library. In addition, sometimes network problem hinders the use of e-resources. Therefore, it is also suggested to the IT Department of the University to look after the network problems.
4. It can be deduced from the findings of the study that, majority of the respondents opined that they need instruction on information literacy skills which indicates that there is an urgent need to include IL skills in the curriculum of postgraduate students. Holding occasional workshops, seminars, training programs may not be enough for these

students to master IL skills. Hence, it is suggested to the university authorities should ensure to include information literacy as a regular course in the curriculum.

CONCLUSION

The empowerment of women has become the most important concerns of the 21st century, which aims to develop them as more knowledgeable, educated, and dynamic individuals who can contribute immensely to the nation in several aspects. Empowerment of women is the real asset, it is essential for them to be active and play multi-dimensional role by realizing their potentiality. Therefore, primarily education plays a pivotal role in raising the status of women and empowering women with the knowledge, skills and developing self-confidence is necessary. These are the key factors in overcoming the barriers faced by women. Therefore, in the present digital environment, information literacy skills are necessary along with technological skills for every individual to be productive and competent in their personal and professional endeavors. These skills are necessary to build up women's capacities to enable them to deal with various academic and professional activities and to achieve their goals. Information literacy is the only way to enable them to make efficient, creative and ethical users of information. These skills of Information literacy form the basis for lifelong learning. Therefore, it is necessary for women to acquire information literacy skills which enhances their abilities in making use of right information sources and in turn leads to their empowerment.

Hence, the present study is an attempt to explore the information literacy competencies of female postgraduate students of Gulbarga University, Kalaburagi. The results reveal that majority of the students lagging behind in the use of various information sources and face many problems in searching for the required information. The findings show that there is a lack of awareness about the use of different search techniques for effective information retrieval. Majority of the respondents opine that they need information literacy programs to improve their information literacy skills. Therefore, it is high time that libraries start Information literacy campaign to empower their user's particularly female students to remain visible and significant contributors in the evolving information society. Hence, it is the responsibility of Librarians and University administrators, to develop a new paradigm by adopting new programs and training sessions on Information literacy, such as orientation programs, webinars, workshops, and seminars according to the needs of the students to enhance their level of information literacy skills.

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