

Purposes of Using Information by Iranian and Indian Social Science Faculty Members: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

The present study aims at comparing purposes of using information by Iranian and Indian Social Science Faculty Members. Totally, 487 respondents (232 from Iran and 255 from India) were randomly selected from both countries. A questionnaire measuring extent of usage for various purposes—to prepare for teaching, to carry out research, to write research proposal, to design and develop research tools, to write articles/books, to deliver special lectures, to plan program /activity, to evolve innovative techniques, to crystallize broad and vague assertions, to maintain professional competence and self- improvement—was prepared by the investigator and administered to the sample selected. Contingency coefficient analysis was employed to verify the hypothesis. Results revealed that teaching and research as purposes of using information were higher for Iranian faculty members than Indian faculty members. In development of research tools, writing articles/books and delivering special lectures, again Iranian faculty members used much more information. To get clarity also Iranian faculty members used more information than Indian faculty members. It is suggested that in India more facilities should be provided to increase the information usage for various purposes.

Keywords: Information Usage, Social Science, Faculty Members, Iran, India.

Introduction

In Iran and India, general and specialized universities were established by the government in both levels. The mission of these universities is to improve literacy, increase scientific and technological research, and train human resources for the developmental needs of the country. The global recession in recent decades has severely diminished the financial resources. As income decreased, government's responsibilities increased exponentially and university budgets witnessed a steady decline. The result is a dysfunctional infrastructure for research, insufficient classrooms and office accommodations, brain-drain, industrial disharmony, student unrest, instability in the academic calendar, and erosion of academic standards.

Faculty members contribute to the accomplishment of the broad range of objectives of the university such as teaching, research, and community service. Faculty provides academic guidance to students and extends the frontiers of knowledge through research and publication. This makes faculty members' need for information inevitable. Much of this information is acquired, processed, and disseminated through the university library which has been variously described as "the heart of the institution".

Review of literature

Biradar et al (2001), attempted to know the use pattern of periodicals by medical practitioners. The study reveals that 76.67% and 75% of medical practitioners need current information on new procedures and medicine respectively. 56.67% of medical practitioners get periodicals through medical associations while major percent (86.67%) of them get current information through seminars, conferences and workshops. Besides, 57.67% and 53.33% of doctors use e-mail and internet as a major communication media. Bayugo and Agbeko (2007) report on a survey of convenient access to and use of electronic databases (CD-ROM and online) including full text journals and their effect on information seeking behavior of health sciences faculty at the College of Health Sciences of the University of Ghana Medical School. The survey documented preferences between print and electronic resource use, and the specific databases and full text journals that faculty members have particularly found useful. The results showed the faculty members' lack of awareness and use of the two most resourceful full text journal databases available at the library (HINARI and PERI). Hence, they resorted to PUBMED as their source of access to full text articles. They conclude that most faculties now prefer using electronic access to information (CD-ROM/online) than traditional print indexes and abstracts.

Giffoni *et al* (2003), have discussed a research project dealing with the study of information users. The authors have analyzed technological advances in the form of networks of electronic information and how these advances affect the behavior of formal and informal academic communication, search, use of information and the generation of knowledge by university researchers. Through an understanding study of a basically qualitative treatment, results on a real context basis were discussed and eventual future settings were viewed. Kwasitsu (2003), discusses the information sources used by design, process, and manufacturing engineers in an international microchip manufacturing company, and the characteristics that influence their information source selection and use. Findings differ from previous research in three ways. First, there was a significant difference in these engineers' information behavior. Second, the higher the engineers' level of education, the less likely they were to depend on their personal memories as sources of information, and the more likely they were to rely on libraries. Third, the higher the level of engineers' education, the less likely they were to consider "personal mastery" (information

tool mastery) as a source influencer.

Munster (2003), conducted a study to understand and identify the characteristics, needs, and habits of researchers from Humanities and Social Sciences at the Universidad de San Andres (UdeSA). Their information behavior is analyzed at the library as well as through their use of the services that the library offers them. Differences between the information needs of Anglo Saxon and Argentinian professors were also studied, taking as objects for study the UdeSA faculty. The results of the survey are presented. Questionnaire is used as a tool to gather information and identify information needs.

Statement of the Problem

From the preceding paragraphs it is clear that the information on purposes of using information by social science faculty members in Iran and India is not documented very well and studies on the international scenario are also too little. This study attempts to assess the various purposes of using information in higher education. The study also intends to compare the purposes of using information among Iranian and Indian faculty members. Hence, the present study is entitled *purposes of using information by Iranian and Indian social science faculty members: A comparative study*.

Objectives

To study the extent of using information for various purposes by Iranian and Indian social science faculty members is the main goal of this study.

Hypothesis

Iranian and Indian social science faculty members differ significantly in usage of information for various purposes—to prepare for teaching, to carry out research, to write research proposal, to design and develop research tools, to write articles/books, to deliver special lectures, to plan program/activity, to evolve innovative techniques, to crystallize broad and vague assertions, to maintain professional competence and self improvement.

Procedure

The study covered a total number of 487 social science faculty members of whom 232 were from Iran and 255 were from India. The questionnaire method was used to elicit data on the extent of usage of information by faculty members in Iran and India. A set of questions were formulated keeping in view the need and objective of the study. The questionnaires were personally distributed to 487 members who were selected randomly from both countries. Further, contingency coefficient analysis employed to find out the association between country and responses, using SPSS for Windows (version 16.0).

Result

Table 1 presents frequency and percent values for purposes of collecting and using information by Indian and Iranian social science faculty members. The Table also presents results of contingency coefficient analysis. Following paragraphs highlight the analysis of results in brief.

a. To prepare for teaching: In the case of preparation for teaching as a purpose to use information, it was found that Iranian faculty members used it highly (29.3%) as compared to their Indian counterparts (8.2%). Contingency coefficient analysis further indicated a significant association between countries and responses (CC=.289; P=.000).

b. To carry out research: 24.6% of the Iranian faculty members used information to carry out research as compared to only 3.9% of Indian faculty members. Contingency coefficient analysis revealed a significant association (CC=.318; P=.000), where we clearly see a higher degree of usage of information to carry out research by Iranian faculty members than Indian faculty members.

Table 1

Frequency and percent values for purposes of collecting and using information by Iranian and Indian social science faculty members and results of test statistics

Responses	Purposes												
		To prepare for teaching		To carry on research		To write research proposal		To design and develop research tool		To write articles, books etc		To deliver special lectures etc	
		Iran	India	Iran	India	Iran	India	Iran	India	Iran	India	Iran	India
Not used	F	3	4	2	-	2	13	14	7	9	10	12	11
	%	1.3	1.6	.9	-	.9	5.1	6.0	2.7	3.9	3.9	5.2	4.3
Rarely used	F	7	5	9	5	14	24	23	43	20	28	30	52
	%	3.0	2.0	3.9	2.0	6.0	9.4	9.9	16.9	8.6	11.0	12.9	20.4
Occasionally used	F	42	91	49	99	46	76	63	116	56	70	76	98
	%	18.1	35.7	21.1	38.8	19.8	29.8	27.2	45.5	24.1	27.5	32.8	38.4
Frequently used	F	112	134	115	141	110	142	87	83	101	147	90	94
	%	48.3	52.5	49.6	55.3	47.4	55.7	37.5	32.5	43.5	57.6	38.8	36.9
Highly used	F	68	21	57	10	60	-	45	6	46	-	24	-
	%	29.3	8.2	24.6	3.9	25.9	-	19.4	2.4	19.8	-	10.3	-
Total	F	232	255	232	255	232	255	232	255	232	255	232	255
	%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Test statistics (CC)		.289		.318		.378		.313		.322		.248	
P value		.000		.000		.000		.001		.000		.000	

CC-contingency coefficient

Table 1 cont'd

Frequency and percent values for purposes of collecting and using information by Iranian and Indian social science faculty members and results of test statistics

Responses	Purposes												
	F	To plan programme /activity		To evolve innovative ideas/ techniques		To crystallize broad and vague assertions		For self improvement		To maintain professional competence		For self fulfillment	
		Iran	India	Iran	India	Iran	India	Iran	India	Iran	India	Iran	India
Not used	F	21	21	26	16	27	55	17	17	16	9	19	37
	%	9.1	8.2	11.2	6.3	11.6	21.6	7.3	6.7	6.9	3.5	8.2	14.5
Rarely used	F	59	83	52	78	50	85	57	28	44	39	50	37
	%	25.4	32.5	22.4	30.6	21.6	33.3	24.6	11.0	19.0	15.3	21.6	14.5
Occasionally used	F	76	111	62	70	67	83	86	91	88	73	79	88
	%	32.8	43.5	26.7	27.5	28.9	32.5	37.1	35.7	37.9	28.6	34.1	34.5
Frequently used	F	59	40	72	91	81	32	54	119	70	134	65	93
	%	25.4	15.7	31.0	35.7	34.9	12.5	23.3	46.7	30.2	52.5	28.0	36.5
Highly used	F	17	-	20	-	7	-	18	-	14	-	19	-
	%	7.3	-	8.6	-	3.0	-	7.8	-	6.0	-	8.2	-
Total	F	232	255	232	255	232	255	232	255	232	255	232	255
	%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Test statistics (CC)		.242		.238		.298		.309		.265		.245	
P value		.000		.000		.000		.000		.000		.000	

CC-contingency coefficient

C. To write research proposals: When using information for writing research proposals was examined, it was found that on the whole Iranian faculty members used much more information to write research proposals in comparison to Indian counterparts. The percentages of high usage were 25.9% and 0% respectively for Iranian and Indian respondents. The percentages of frequent usage were 47.4% and 55.7% respectively for Iranian and Indian respondents. Contingency coefficient analysis further indicated a significant association between countries and responses (CC=.378; P=.000).

d. To design and develop research tools: 19.4% of the Iranian faculty members used information highly to design and develop research tools as against only 2.4% of their Indian counterparts. Contingency coefficient analysis revealed a significant association (CC=.313; P=.001), where we clearly see a higher degree of usage of information to design and

develop research tools by Iranian faculty members than Indian faculty members.

e. To write articles, books, etc: When purpose of usage of information to write article, books, etc was examined, it was observed that 19.8% of the faculty members used it as against 0% of Indian faculty members. Contingency coefficient analysis further indicated a significant association between countries and responses ($CC=.322$; $P=.000$), where we see higher usage of information from Iranian faculty members than Indian faculty members.

f. To deliver special lectures: As seen earlier, even in use of information to deliver special lectures etc., 10.3% of the Iranian faculty members used it as against 0% of Indian faculty members, 38.8% of Iranian faculty members used it frequently compared to 36.9% of the Indian faculty members and so on. Contingency coefficient analysis further indicated a significant association between countries and responses ($CC=.248$; $P=.000$).

g. To plan program/activity: In the case of planning program/activity as a purpose to use information, it was found that Iranian faculty members used it highly (7.3%) and frequently (25.4%) as compared to their Indian counterparts (0% used it highly and 15.7% used it frequently). Contingency coefficient analysis further indicated a significant association between countries and responses ($CC=.242$; $P=.000$).

h. To evolve innovative ideas/techniques: On the whole, it was observed that 31.0% and 8.6% of the Iranian faculty members used information frequently to evolve innovative ideas/techniques, as against only 35.7% and 0% of their Indian counterparts respectively. Further, it was observed that 21.6% of the Indian faculty members did not use information for this purpose as against 11.6% of their Iranian counterparts.

i. To crystallize broad and vague assertions: When purpose of using information to crystallize broad and vague assertions was examined, it was observed that 3.0% of the faculty members used it highly as against 0% of Indian faculty members. Further it was observed that 34.9% of the Iranian faculty members used more frequently than 12.5% of the Indian faculty members. Contingency coefficient analysis further indicated a significant association between countries and responses ($CC=.298$; $P=.000$).

j. For self improvement: In self improvement as a purpose of using information 7.8% of the Iranian sample used it highly as against 0% of Indian sample, 23.3% of the Iranian sample used it frequently as against 46.7% of the Indian sample. Contingency coefficient analysis further indicated a significant association between countries and responses ($CC=.309$; $P=.000$).

k. To maintain professional competence: As seen earlier, even in use of information to maintain professional competence, 6.0% of the Iranian faculty members used it very highly as against 0% of Indian faculty members, 30.2% of Iranian faculty members frequently used it compared to 52.5% of the Indian faculty members and so on. Contingency coefficient analysis further indicated a significant association between countries and responses ($CC=.265$; $P=.000$).

I. For self fulfillment: In self fulfillment as a purpose of usage of information, 8.2% of the Iranian sample used it highly as against 0% of Indian sample, 28.0% of the Iranian sample used it frequently as against 36.5% of the Indian sample. Contingency coefficient analysis further indicated a significant association between countries and responses ($CC=.245$; $P=.000$).

On the whole, we see that Iranian faculty members used information for various purposes more than their Indian counterparts. Overall, Iranian faculty members used information for various purposes—teaching, research, writing books and articles, delivering special lectures, planning program/activity, having clarity and so on.

Discussion

Main findings of the present study are:

- Teaching and research as purposes of usage of information were found to be higher for Iranian faculty members than Indian faculty members.
- In development of research tools, writing articles/books, delivering special lectures, again Iranian faculty members used more information.
- To get clarity also Iranian faculty members used more of information than Indian faculty members.

Hypothesis 1 is accepted as we find that Iranian faculty members used information for various purposes more than Indian faculty members. The universities in Iran are relatively larger than universities selected in India. All the faculty members in the Iranian universities have been provided computers and net facilities long back. Further, the faculty members have been given net connections freely to their residences too through the universities. Some of the campuses are WI-FI enabled. Once there are enough facilities, the usage of such facilities will be more for gathering information for various researches, academic and personal reasons.

Further, in Iran, incentives in various forms (including financial) are provided for those who publish articles/books at International level. Promotions are based on academic and research activities. This automatically motivates the faculty members to use more information for various purposes.

It is suggested that even in India, the Iranian system of providing incentives and promotional systems should be implemented. This will lead to increased usage of various information resources, which would be helpful for their research and developmental activities.

Conclusion

To conclude, it is clear that definitely Iranian universities provide better information

resources than Indian Universities. The Government of India through UGC and other organizations should try to improve the facilities so that purposes of using information by Indian faculty members could be increased. Also, in Iran, incentives should be offered for faculty members who use extensive information for academic and scientific endeavors. They should be provided with additional benefits like financial incentives and promotions. Social science as a whole spectrum of research can be flourished if incentives are provided, when biological sciences and natural sciences are trying to dominate over other sciences.

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