EXPLORING THE NEED AND STRATEGIES OF INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOUR OF LAW PRACTITIONERS AT HIGH COURT OF KARNATAKA, DHARWAD BENCH LIBRARY: A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore the Information Seeking BehaviourLawpractitionersof the High Court of Karnataka Dharwad Bench. It throws light on channels used by the lawyers and information sources preferred by them, methods employed for getting the needed information and their library use. The questionnaire was used as data collection tool and was distributed randomly among 120 advocates. And 92 filled in questionnaires were returned, giving an overall response rate of 76.66present. It was found that respondents used various sources of information as according to their needs. Law Reports, Law Journals (print/electronic) were ranked as the most important sources followed by law reports and statutes and Bare Acts. The online data base and CD-ROM Databaseand Internet based sources, were most frequently used IT-based facilities to fulfil theuserinformation needs.

Keywords: Information Seeking Behaviour, Information Skills of Law Practitioners,Legal Research, Legal Resources, Information Technology.

1. INTRODUCTION

In this modern era Law is a highly knowledge, intensive field which is having significant bearing on life of individuals as well as society on a whole. The law practitioners such as lawyers, judges, and law faculty are supposed to access information from different information resources, like Books, Commentaries, Reporters, Decisions, Online and offline database, Network based resources and Colleagues, etc., for legal information to represent their clients effectively, to reach fair decisions, and to guide effectively tomorrow's professionals. In doing so, they often rely on law libraries and librarians. However, the success of legal system and law practitioners depends upon timely access the accurate and relevant information. Understanding information, seeking behaviour is of great significance to libraries and publishers. This study therefore investigated the information needs and the information seeking behaviour of law practitioners of High court of Karnataka Dharwad Bench and libraries.

2. Concept of Information Seeking Behaviour:

The decision-makers such as politicians, governments, managers, judges and so on perceive information as the process by which event of the external world are conceived and thus provides opportunity to form judgments and make decisions on economic, education, moral and legal issues. It is potentially useful for decision making and question answering, which leads to a 'state of knowing'". Therefore, information is an important tool used in the realization of any goal set by an individual, group, or organization, state and nation. Legal resource required in any society and a vital organ of human existence, without which the whole of humanity would have been in darkness. It is a vital resource that stimulates the social justice the society. For example- judges, lawyers and law students, as they require information in their day to day activities.

Information seeking behaviour deals with those activities a person engages in when identifying his or her own need of information, searching for such information in a better way and using or transferring of information. Information behaviour is the totality of human behaviour in relation to the sources and channels of information including both active and passive information seeking and information use. Thus it includes face to face and online communication with others as well as the passive reception of information. ISB involves personal reasons for seeking information, the kinds of information which are being sought and the ways and sources with which needed information is being sought. ISB is expressed in various forms from reading printed material to research and experimentation. The scholars, students and teachers actively seek information from the various media available in the libraries of the institutes.

3. Meaning and Definitions:

The concept of "information behaviour" was coined in the late 1990s, but it traces its roots to the concept of "information needs and uses" that arose in the 1960s (Khan and Shafique, 2011).

Information seeking behaviour is a broad term, which involves a set of actions that an individual takes to express information needs, seek information, evaluate and select information, and finally uses this information to satisfy his/her information needs.

According to Wilson "Information Seeking Behaviour is the purposive seeking for information as a consequence of a need to satisfy some goal. In the course of seeking, the individual may interact with manual information systems.

Therefore broadly we can say that information behaviour research is a study that explains how a person is affected by their behaviour towards their quest in seeking for information. It is an interesting study because we can see how an individual or a group based acquired information based on the available theories of information seeking behaviour information.

4. Related Study

The study is dealing with information need and information seeking strategies, so most of the literature reviews belong to information seeking behaviour of law practitioners; some general references are also done from other subject field of study.

Studying human's information seeking behaviour begun through performing researches by reading and through library. Study on the use of library dates back.Ellis (1989), Ellis et al. (1993), and Ellis &Haugan (1997) studied the information seeking behaviour of social scientists, research physicists and chemists, and engineers and research scientists in an industrial firm. Finally, they proposed a model which can be used by the researchers of different fields with a little change. This model is based on the information searching on web.

Manoj, P. &Majid(2005) has conducted the study to determine the information needs and seeking behaviour of litigation lawyers. The purpose was to investigate the types of information sources and the preferences of lawyers in selecting different information sources. It also investigates the different types of information required at various stages of a case and tries to understand the adequacy of information to the lawyers.

Ucak and Kurbanoglu (1998) examined the information need and information seeking behaviour of professors in universities of turkey in the fields of engineering, human, and social sciences. The results showed that the researchers' information need and information seeking behaviour depend on their field of research activity, and vary from field to field.

5. High Court of Karnataka, Dharwad Bench Library;

Dharwad BAR Association is a professional body of lawyers. It is responsible for the regulation of the legal profession in their jurisdiction. The Dharwad Bar Association is committed to a more integrated lawyer community. The Association has been established with a view to facilitate greater interaction and understanding amongst legal fraternity of India. It also aspires to strengthen the relationship between the Bar and the Bench, in turn building an environment conducive to effective administration of justice and maintenance of rule of law.

6. Objectives of the Study:

This work intends to study the following:

1. To examine information seeking behaviour of practitioners in High Court of Karnataka Dharwad.

2. To find out the purpose of information need.

3. To find the visits of library and kind of information sources used by law them in acquiring the information.

4. To explore the use of information technology.

5. To find the level of satisfaction of law practitioners with various legal database and information services.

6. To study the problems faced by the law practitioners while seeking information.

7. Methodology and Scope:

Research in any discipline is interlinked with methodology. Methodology involves various tools, techniques and approaches. Since the present study is concentrating on information seeking behaviour of law practitioners of High Court of Karnataka Dharwad Bench, Dharwad. A questionnaire based survey method was adopted to gather the data on the information seeking behaviour of lawyers. The questionnaires were distributed to 120lawyers randomly, who visited the library frequently. 92 filled in questionnaires were returned by the lawyers with the response being 76.66%.

8. Results and Discussion

8.1. Gender-Wise Distribution of Respondents

Table 1 indicates sex-wise distribution of respondents. Out of 92 respondents surveyed, 81 (88.04%) respondents are male and about 11 (11.96%) respondents are female. It can be inferred from table that male respondents dominate over female respondents.

Table – 1:Gender-wise Distribution of Respondents

Sl. No.	Gender	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Male	81	88.04
2	Female	11	11.96
	Total	**92**	**100**

8.2. Qualification-Wise Distribution of Respondents

It is found from the study that, out of total 92 respondents, 58 (63.04%) are the holder of 3 years L.L.B. degree, followed by 24 (26.09%) are 5 years L.L.B. degree, 8 (8.70%) are having L.L.M. and only 2 (2.17%) of the respondents are havingL.L.M. with Ph.D. degree (Table 2).

Table – 2: Qualification-Wise Distribution of Respondents

Sl. No.	User Category	Total	Percentage
1	L.L.B - 3 Yrs	58	63.04
2	L.L.B - 5 Yrs	24	26.09
3	L.L.M	8	8.70
4	L.L.M , PhD	2	2.17
	Total	**92**	100

8.3. Classification of Users by Age

Classification of users by age is given in the Table 3, and it reveals that the majority of the users belong to the age group between 31-40 years (42.39%), and thenfollows the age group between 25 to 30 years (28.26%). The next in line is the age group between 41 to 50 years (11.96%), followed by the age group of 51-60 years 9 (9.78%) and 61 and above are 7 (7.61%). Table clearly shows that, the majority of respondents belong to the age group of 31 to 40. It indicates that the majority of respondents are elders.

Table – 3: Classification of Users by Age

Sl. No.	Age	Frequency	Percentage %
1	25-30 Years	26	28.26
2	31-40 Years	39	42.39
3	41-50 Years	11	11.96
4	51-60 Years	9	9.78
5	61 and Above	7	7.61
	Total	**92**	**100**

8.4. Frequency of Visits to the Library

It is general understanding that the frequency of users' visit to library depends upon the availability of resources, organization, maintenance and timely services that it provides. Table 4
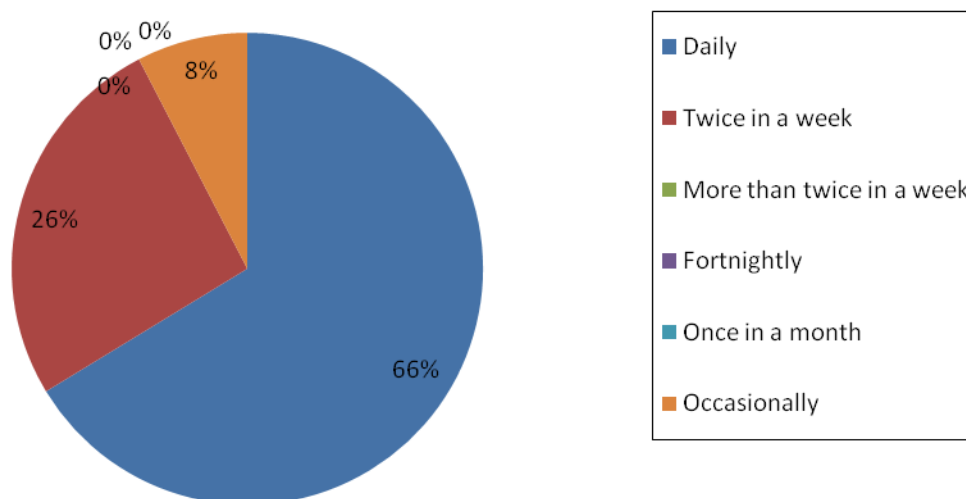
indicates that the majority of respondents, i.e. 61 (66.30%) visit library daily, about 24 (26.09%) respondents visit library twice in a week and about 7 (7.61%) respondents visiting library occasionally.

Table – 4, Frequency of Visits to the Library

Sl. No.	Frequency	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Daily	61	66.30
2	Every alternative day	24	26.09
3	More than twice in a week	-	-
4	Fortnightly	-	-

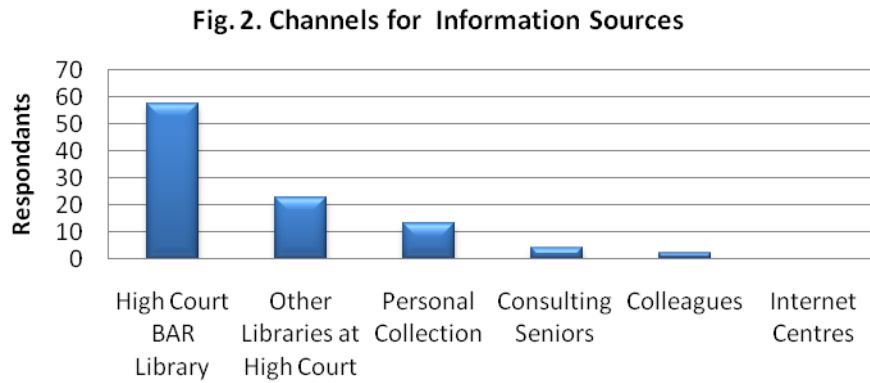| 5	Once in a month	-	-
6	Occasionally	7	7.61
	Total	**92**	**100**

Fig.1. Frequencies of Visits to the Library

8.5. Channels for Accessing Information Sources

The High Court Bar Library is the major source of information for lawyers. About 57.60%advocates consult Bar Library for meeting their information curiosity; following by the other libraries at High Court has made agreat impact on information seeking behaviour of lawyers as 22.83%. And 13.04% of them usingtheir personal Collection for meeting onsite offsite information needs. Few of lawyers consultingtheir seniors and colleagues.

Table -5.Channels for Accessing Information Sources

Sl. No	Particulars	No	%
1	High Court BAR Library	53	57.60
2	Other Libraries at High Court	21	22.83
3	Personal Collection	12	13.04
4	Consulting Seniors	4	04.34
5	Colleagues	2	02.17
6	Internet Centres	-	-

Fig. 2. Channels for Information Sources

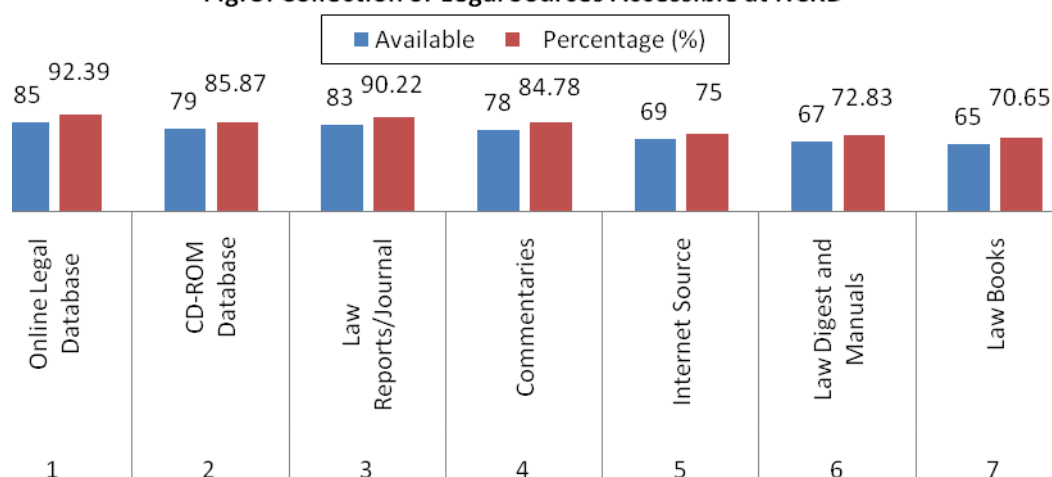### 8.6. Collection of Legal Sources Accessible at HCKD Library

Table 6 indicates the user's awareness as well as their familiarity with source of legal collection. It is observed that majority respondents are accessed the following sources; Law Reports/Journal, Commentaries, Law Books, Law Digest and Manuals, Online Legal Database, CD-ROM Databases and Internet Source etc. Table-6, presents the use of different types of sources by the users of HCKD Library. The table reveals that 92.39% of respondents use online legal databasefollowed by law reports/journal 90.22%, CD-ROM Data base 85.87%, commentaries 84.78%, Internet source 75.00%, law digest and manuals, 72.83% and law books70.65%.Information resources with their characteristics of flexibility, portability, searching facility, storage and access/dissemination are beneficial in terms of time and space.

Table – 6: Collection of Legal Sources accessible at HCKD Library to use

Sl. No.	Sources	Available	Percentage (%)
1	Online Legal Database	85	92.39
2	CD-ROM Database	79	85.87
3	Law Reports/Journal	83	90.22
4	Commentaries	78	84.78
5	Internet Source	69	75.00
6	Law Digest and Manuals	67	72.83
7	Law Books	65	70.65

Note: Respondents could choose multiple options.

Fig. 3. Collection of Legal Sources Accessible at HCKD

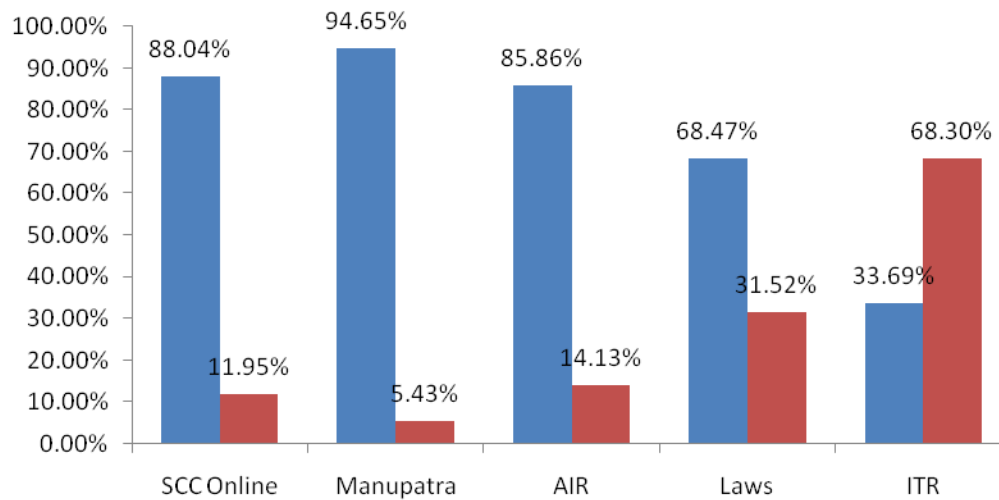### 8.7. Various Commercial Databases Used by Lawyers/ Law Practitioner

Table – 7 shows the various databases used by the law practitioners at HCKD Library. Manupatrais most frequently used database for various purposes, majority of the respondents' 94.65% used to the greater extent, since it is one of the well-known and user friendly database in law field. However 88.04 % of the respondents are used SCC (Supreme Court Cases) Online to the greater extent, followed by 85.86% of the respondents are using AIR (All India Reporter) and 68.47% used LAWS with greater extent followed by 68.47% used ITR others respectively. Further it is found that5.43% usedManuptra to the some extent, whereas11.95% of the respondents used SCC Online to the some extent, followed by 14.13% of the respondents are used AIR to the some extent. And 31.52% used Laws ,68.30% used ITR some extent respectively.

Table – 7: Various Commercial Databases used by Lawyers/ Law Practitioner

Sl. No.	Database	Great Extent	Some Extent
1	SCC Online	81 (88.04%)	11 (11.95%)
2	Manupatra	87 (94.65%)	05 (5.43%)
3	AIR	79 (85.86%)	13 (14.13%)
4	Laws	63 (68.47%)	29 (31.52%)
5	ITR	31(33.69%)	61(68.30%)

Note: Respondents could choose multiple options.

Fig. 4.Various Commercial DatabasesLaw Practitioners

8.8. Public Domain Legal Resourcesused by Lawyers/ Law Practitioner

Table. 8; Public Domain Legal Resources

Table – 8 shows the various public domain free databases usedbythe Lawyers.Indian-kanoon is most frequently used database for various purposes, majority of the78 (84.78%)used to the greater extent, and since it is one of the well-known and popular database in law field. However 77 (83.69%) of the respondents usedLII of Indiato the greater extent, 57 (61.95%)ofthe respondents are using PRS Legislation India and 56 (60.86%) respondents using India Code followed by31 (33.69%) used JUDIS and 29 (31.52%) used Find Law respectively. Further it is found that63 (68.47%) used Find Lawto the some extent, whereas61 (66.13%) used JUDIS to the some extent, 36 (39.13%) used India Code and 36 (39.13%) respondents used India Code 15 (16.30%)ofthe respondents used LII of Indiaand14 (15.21%) respectively to the some extent. since Indian Kanoon one of the well-known free database in law field.

Table. 9; Public Domain Legal Resources

Sl.No	Public Domain Legal Resources	Great Extent	Some Extent
1	Indian Kanoon	78 (84.78%)	14 (15.21%)
2	IndiaCode	56 (60.86%)	36 (39.13%)
3	JUDIS	31 (33.69%)	61 (66.13%)
4	FindLaw	29 (31.52%)	63 (68.47%)
5	LII of India (Supreme Court Judgments from 1950)	77 (83.69%)	15 (16.30%)
6	PRS Legislation India	57 (61.95%)	35 (38.04%)

Note: Respondents could choose multiple options.

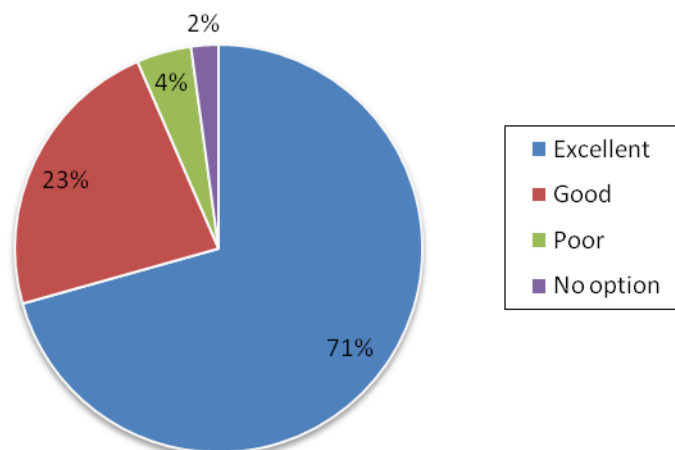Fig. 5. Public Domain Database used by Law Pratitioners

8.9. General Assessment of Bar Library and Its Services

The respondents were asked to provide their overall general assessment of the library services to meet out their information needs. Majority of advocates attach great importance to the Bar Library in meeting their information requirements. The responses in this regard are presented in table about 70.65% of them rated it as 'excellent' and 22.83% considered good' in satisfying their information needs. Only 4.35% lawyers stated the Bar Library as poor in its collection and services, while remaining 2.17% advocates have not given any rating to Library and opted for 'have no opinion' option. It is clear that majority of the respondents were satisfied with the collections, services and facilities provided by the library to meet out their information needs as shown in the table.

Table – 9: Assessment about the Library Services

Sl. No.	Particulars	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Excellent	65	70.65
2	Good	21	22.83
3	Poor	04	4.35
4	No option	02	2.17

Fig.6. General Assessment of the BAR Library

8.10.   Preferred Format of Information Resources

The respondents were asked to give their opinion about frequency of using preferred format of information resources. Table 10 reveals that 59 (64.13%) respondents are preferred to use the both print and electronic sources, at the same time 14 (15 %) respondents are preferred print sources and 19 (20.65%) respondents are preferred to use the electronic sources (Table 10).

Table – 10: Preferred Format forInformation Resources

Sl. No.	Particulars	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Print	14	15.21%
2	Electronic	19	20.65 %
3	Audio/Visual	-	
4	Both Print and Electronic	59	64.13 %
Total		**92**	

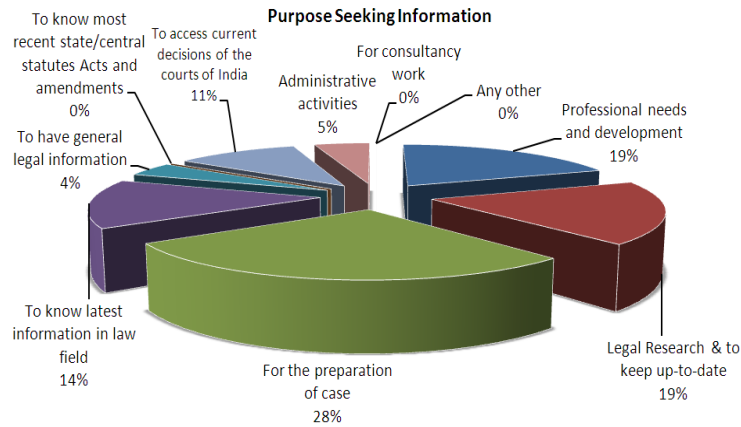**8.11.   Purpose of Seeking Information**

It is clear from table 11 that 94.56% lawyers need information for preparation of cases in hand, about 66.30% lawyers seeking information for professional development;about 63.04% users need information to keep up-to-date of law and legal research about their clients,the 56. 52% seeking information to know most recent state/central Act and Amendments, the 48.91% for knowing latest updates of law, about 35.86% seeking information to access current decisions of India. And remaining 16.30% for administrative activities followed by 14.13% for general information Improving personal knowledge, preparation for legal judicial, consultancy work, etc.

Table –11: Purpose Seeking Information

Sl. No.	Particulars	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Professional needs and development	61	66.30
2	Legal Research and to keep up-to-date	58	63.04
3	For the preparation of case	87	94.56
4	To know latest information in law field	45	48.91
5	To have general legal information	13	14.13
6	To know most recent state/central statutes Acts and amendments	52	56.52
7	To access current decisions of the courts of India	33	35.86
8	Administrative activities	15	16.30
9	For consultancy work	-	-
10	Any other	-	-

Note: Respondents could choose multiple options.

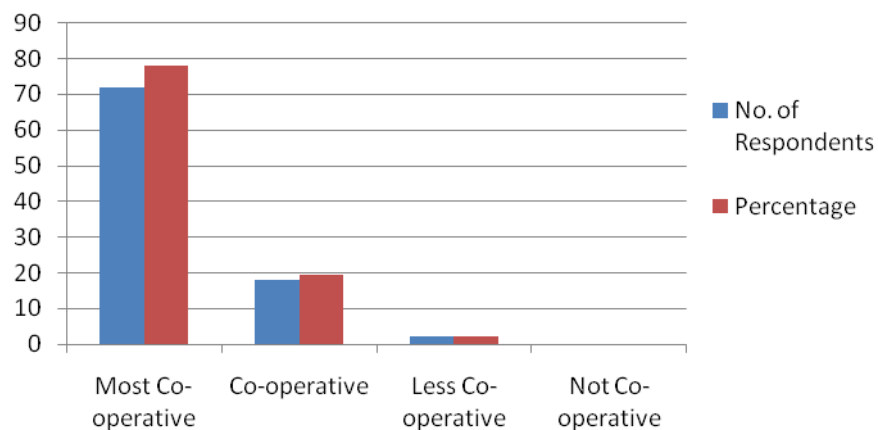Fig. 7. Purpose of Seeking Information

8.12. Co-operation of Library Staff While Searching the Required Information.

Respondents were asked to give their opinion on assistance of library staff during searching the required information. The table 12 depicts that 72 (78.26%) respondents are getting most cooperation by the library staff followed by 18 (19.56%) respondents are taking just satisfactory assistance from the staff and2.17% don't take the assistance of library staff during searching the required information.

Table – 12: Cooperation of Library Staff

Sl. No.	Co-operation of Library Staff	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Most Co-operative	72	78.26
2	Co-operative	18	19.56
3	Less Co-operative	02	2.17
4	Not Co-operative	00	00

Fig. 8.Co-operation of Library Staff

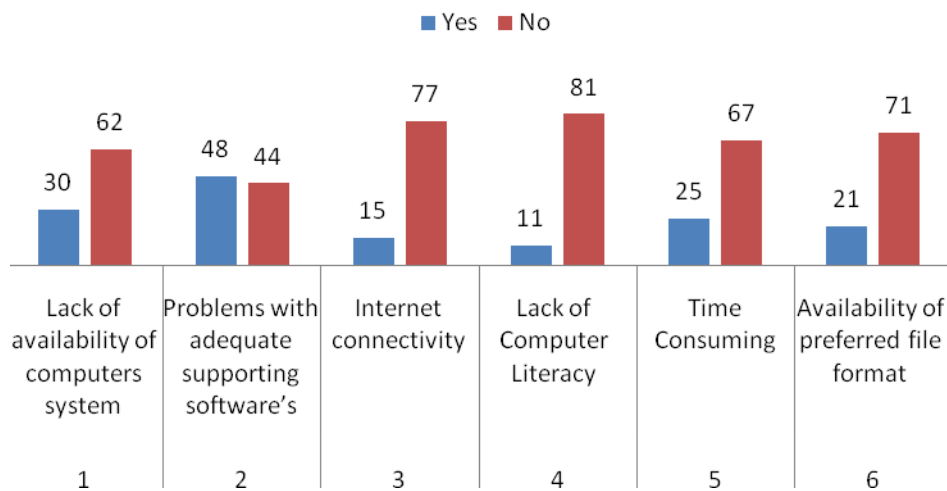**8.13.** **Problems in Accessing Electronic Information Resources**

It can be seen from the table 13shows that a large majority of the respondents face problems while accessing the electronic information resources. 48 (52.17%) respondents faced problems with accessing suitable software while accessing;30 (32.61%)respondents faced lack of availability of suitable personal computers, 25 (27.60%)respondents having less time to access their need in their busy schedule, 21(22.82%) facing the problem of availability of file format while accessing the information and 15 (16.30%) respondents faced lack of Internet connectivity while accessing, theelectronic information resources.

Table – 13: Problems in Accessing the Electronic Information Resources

Sl. No.	Problem	Yes	No
1	Lack of availability of computers system	30 (32.61%)	62 (67.39%)
2	Problems with adequate supporting software's	48 (52.17%)	44 (47.83%)
3	Internet connectivity	15 (16.30%)	77 (83.70%)
4	Lack of Computer Literacy	11(11.95%)	81(88.04%)
5	Time Consuming	25 (27.60%)	67(72.82%)
6	Availability ofpreferred file format	21(22.82%)	71 (77.17%)

Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage

Fig. 9 Problems in Accessing the Electronic Information Resources

Conclusion:

In modern legal society, information is a vital instrument required for the day-to-day activities of people in the legal profession, who need legal information to make vital and rational decisions that may directly involve human life. Print sources and Internet resources, are an inseparable part of today's legal educational system. Lawyer's community are more and more dependency on the internet for their various educational, research, and professional purposes. The E-resources as well as print resources available in the high court libraries are playing prominent roles in facilitating access to the required and relevant information to the users. It has become an unavoidable one for every law practitioner for their professional development. The study leads to the conclusion though under the influence of changing information environment, majority of

lawyers are using both the online and offline databases, but the print format has not lost its ground it is also used in same ratio as e resources, had the senior advocates responded to questionnaire, the results would have been more favourable to print format. Around 64.13% of lawyers prefer to use both print as well as e-resources to find required information. However, majority of respondents in present study comprised of youngsters. Study brought forward that lawyers depend more on libraries to seek required information. This shows the importance of Law libraries while fulfilling desires of every legal practitioner and also encourage the library professionals to come forward with new ideal services to prove their worth to the law professionals by providing them recent, reliable and relevant information.The results of this studyindicates that majority users use library to fulfil their legal need. Most of the users satisfied with available print resources/back volumes and database.

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