



An Investigation on the Use of Electronic Resources by Faculty and Research Scholars of National Law Universities of North India

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this study is to examine how research scholars and faculty at National Law Universities of North India use and are aware of electronic resources for legal information. The parameters used to determine the level of awareness of e-resources include the easiest way to access legal e-resources, obstacles and difficulties encountered when doing so, the most popular online legal database, and recommendations for e-resource promotion. A well-structured questionnaire intended for faculty members and research scholars at a select National Law Universities of North India was used to gather the necessary data for the study. According to the study, the most popular online databases are Manupatra and SCC Online, while the most popular e-resources are law reform reports and case law databases. Upgrading of ICT facilities, the acquisition of new databases and e-resources, and the planning of end-user training programs are all ways to improve end-user awareness and utilization of e-resources. The study further highlighted the need for NLUs to maintain a set of guidelines and policies regarding encouraging users to use electronic resources in order to improve usage.

KEYWORDS: E-resources, Legal Information resources, Online databases, E-journals, E-books, NLU



1. INTRODUCTION

Since the development of ICT, information has been widely accessible in a variety of electronic formats, giving people the freedom to choose what information they like or don't like. Research in the legal and related fields has evolved in response to users' growing information needs and their ever-increasing information quest. The legal research field has experienced significant growth in the past few years, and the tools and resources available to researchers in this field are essential for obtaining current and pertinent information. Compared to other types of research, legal research requires a more methodical approach and procedure to achieve the best possible outcomes. In addition to theoretical research materials, a legal researcher needs accurate print and electronic legal research resources, including law reports, constitutions, case laws, treatises, monographs, parliamentary debates, and proceedings. Since e-resources contain all of the legal tools in one location, they play a huge relief in this situation. Libraries have a wider range of options when converting from print to electronic resources in the era of the knowledge and information revolution. With the introduction of electronic resources, libraries have undergone a significant transformation, and patrons now favor them over print materials. "To effectively deliver electronic resources to the academic community, libraries and information services have undergone significant transformation. The shift from print to electronic document delivery services has occurred very quickly" (Appleton 619). The advancement of information and communication technology (ICT) has given libraries the ability to offer information in a variety of electronic resource formats. According to IGI-Global "Information materials that are in electronic form which include electronic books (e-books; e-newspapers; e-journals) as well as internet resources, it also consists of magazines, archives, theses, conference papers, government papers; script and monographs in an electronic form." E-resources can be broadly classified into two categories: a) Online Electronic Resources, which include electronic books, journals, databases, audio and video content, lectures, and webpages. b) Alternative formats of electronic resources, such as CD-ROMs and portable computer databases. But, in the digital age, libraries must

implement a system for obtaining and assessing electronic resources; otherwise, they will find it challenging to manage these resources and to set up ICT infrastructure to make the most of them.

The establishment of first Law College in 1855 traced the legacy of legal education in India in 19th century. It was later shifted to the University of Bombay in 1860. According to Bar Council of India 'Rule of Legal Education' Part-IV "National Law Universities constituted and established by statutes of the Union or States and mandated to start and run Law courses". Apart from the National Law Universities mentioned at Bar Council of India website, there are around 23 NLUs in India which are running almost in every state of India. This study concentrates on the National Law Universities established in North India. Among the states and union territories of North India, Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh and Utrakhand do not have any National Law University. All other states and union territories in North India have established National Law Universities to enable students for study and research.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aims to investigate the level of awareness and use of electronic resources by faculty members and research scholars of NLUs of North India. The main objectives of the study have been the following:

- i. To explore the level of awareness about e-resources among the faculty members and research scholars;
- ii. To examine the purpose of faculty members and research scholars on the use of e-resources in their studies and research;
- iii. To investigate the frequency of e-resources by faculty members and research scholars;
- iv. To find out most preferred legal database in Indian and International perspective;
- v. To know the preference for different type of legal databases;
- vi. To examine the level of satisfaction while using e-resources and ;
- vii. To identify various challenges and barriers of using e-resources by faculty members and research scholars

3. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Materials containing data or computer programs that can be encoded, interpreted, and altered locally using computer-connected devices or remotely via networks and the internet are referred to as electronic resources (Reitz, 2014). E-books, e-journals, e-databases with full text, indexing and abstracting reference (directories, dictionaries, encyclopedias, etc.), e-images, e-audio/visual resources, and numeric and statistical resources are examples of electronic resources (Tamrakar and Garg 40). Legal information management is provided by a specialized law library for the benefit of the community. Reference services, literature searches, SDI, case law alerts, newspaper clipping alerts, current content alerts, article indexing, interlibrary loans, and reprography services are just a few of the specialized services offered by law universities. In addition to electronic books from prestigious publishers like Oxford University Press and Taylor and Francis, the majority of law schools surveyed subscribe to premier online databases like Westlaw, JSTOR, Lexis, and HeinOnline under the international databases category and SCC Online, CLA Online, Maupatra, and AIR Info Tech under the Indian database collection. A law university must be well equipped with electronic databases with number of research support services like plagiarism check software, statistical evaluation software, remote access software with a search mechanism to use open access legal information available in public domain (Akash, Rai and Jain). Legal professionals view electronic information resources as vital resources because they are useful for legal research and education, as well as being needed and referred in court cases. According to a survey conducted in the Pakistani law colleges that make up the University of Peshawar, these resources are not adequately available, and because there are no appropriate training programs for them, their usage is quite low. The author recommends that in order to ensure that subscribed e-resources are used to their fullest potential, law college libraries implement some kind of mechanism (Khan and Bhatti 119). In legal research, practice, and information, electronic resources are generally accepted. Since most court rulings, law reports, case laws, and text books are now used and preferred in electronic format, their acceptance and use have skyrocketed in recent years.

The extensive searching and cross-referencing capabilities of electronic resources have made them an indispensable component of legal research and teaching. However, Nigerian law faculties use these resources less or not at all because of a number of limitations, including low subscription rates (Amusa and Morayo 139). To make the most use of e-resources, the parties involved in library administration and management should allocate more funds for the creation of ICT infrastructure and e-resource procurement. According to the study, library patrons at Orissa's Business School Libraries should be aware of e-resources, and in order to do this, specialized training or awareness programs should be created for effective e-resource use (Swain and Panda 74). The amount of money needed for subscriptions to electronic resources and their use has grown yearly. According to the author, the university's gateway to all of its electronic resource subscriptions is the library's homepage. ICT infrastructure and internet speed are the primary external factors influencing how effective e-resources are. Insufficient information can also hinder the utilization of electronic resources; thus, libraries must enhance their collection and resources to fulfill users' research needs (Shuling 72). The 21st-century academic library's most valuable information and research tool is an electronic resource. Information storage, retrieval, and dissemination have all been significantly impacted by the rapid advancements in communication and information technologies. Students use fewer electronic resources because training programs are only scheduled at the start of the academic year. These must be scheduled on a regular basis in order to raise students' awareness of the use of electronic resources (Tlakula and Fombad 861). Users of University of Delhi and IIT Delhi heavily utilize e-journals, which are a crucial part of e-resources. Since e-journals contain a wealth of up-to-date and relevant information, the authors looked into the possibility that users were also using them to gather relevant information for their research in addition to building and updating their knowledge. Nevertheless, users encounter a number of issues when utilizing e-journals, including slow download times, inadequate training, a shortage of computer terminals, etc. The author recommends that appropriate user education programs be carried out to raise awareness and encourage better use of e-journals (Nisha and Ali, 57).

The use and awareness of electronic resources has been evaluated at Institute of Technology, Banaras Hindu University. For their research and studies, the author discovers that users find electronic resources to be more advantageous and time-saving. The inability to access e-resources quickly is one of the main obstacles that must be removed in order to facilitate research work. Slow internet speed is one such obstacle (Shukla and Mishra 184). Users need electronic resources for their research, but they are unable to fully utilize the ones that are available because of certain problems. The reasons continue to be users' poor research abilities, restricted access to some government resources as a result of e-resource usage being discouraged, and detrimental effects on access to them (Siddiqui 343). The use of electronic resources can be examined using a variety of metrics, and one of the primary metrics that aids in determining the database's popularity is the downloading of full texts of documents. The ideal quantity of document downloads varies among academic institutions and appears to be highest during exam season. In this case, libraries must fully outfit themselves with ICT infrastructure in order to satisfy the needs of users generally for research (Tripathi and Kumar 272). In addition to their accessibility, e-resources' effectiveness in research can be assessed using a variety of metrics and scales, according to usage studies. Institutions can benefit from these investigations by using e-resources more effectively and efficiently. Given that the e-resources were retrieved promptly and in detail, these evaluation criteria and scale may also be useful in student placements. To improve the use of the e-resources, a clear plan and evaluation scale can be created (Garg et al. 64). In order to create an online legal information system that meets the needs of the Indian legal community, the study investigates what legal information the community in India needs. The majority of issues that respondents encountered when using online legal resources included inadequate website design, a dearth of information about legal information tools, and a lack of help features. Another significant obstacle to easy access to online legal information resources is that users do not fully utilize open access legal information resources (Bhardwaj and Madhusudhan 593).

4. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

At present there are 23 National Law Universities which are established in almost every state of India. The scope of the present study has been limited to an exploratory study about investigating the use and awareness of e-resources by faculty members and research scholars of National Law Universities of North India. The institutions selected for the study are as follows:

- i. Ram Manohar Lohia National Law University, Lucknow,
- ii. Rajiv Gandhi National University of Law, Patiala
- iii. National Law University, Delhi.
- iv. Himachal Pradesh National Law University, Shimla
- v. The type or category of the users selected for the study comprises Faculty members and Research Scholars only.

5. METHODOLOGY

A well-structured user questionnaire was created and given to research scholars and faculty members at select National Law Universities of North India in order to get the necessary data. A total of 327 copies of the questionnaires were distributed to users; 235 of those were returned and deemed appropriate for further examination. Faculty members and research scholars respectively returned 100 and 135 completed questionnaire copies. Tables with the gathered data and findings are shown, and Excel worksheets are used for analysis. Throughout the study, references have been given using MLA Style, Ninth Edition.

Table 5.1: Details of Questionnaires Distributed and Received

S.N.	User Category	Questionnaire Distributed	Questionnaire Received	Percentage
1.	Faculty	129	100	77.51%
2.	Research Scholars	198	135	68.18%
	Total	327	235	71.86%

As previously stated, a total of 327 questionnaires were circulated throughout the National Law Universities of North India; 235 completed questionnaires i.e. 71.86% of the total, were received. The division of the total number of real responders in

each category among the National Law Universities of North India is displayed in Table 5.1.1.

Table 5.1.1: Total Number of Respondents

S.No.	Name of the University	Faculty Members	Research Scholars	Total
1.	Himachal Pradesh National Law University (HPNLU), Shimla	25	29	54
		46.29%	53.70%	100%
2.	National Law University, Delhi (NLUD)	27	29	56
		48.21%	51.78%	100%
3.	Rajiv Gandhi National University of Law (RGNUL), Patiala	26	26	52
		50%	50%	100%
4.	Ram Manohar Lohia National Law University (RMLNLU), Lucknow	22	51	73
		30.13%	69.86%	100%

There were 54 responders in total from Himachal Pradesh National Law University, Shimla, of which 29 (53.70%) were research scholars and 25 (46.29%) were faculty members, as shown in Table 5.1.1. Similarly, out of the 56 responders from National Law University Delhi, 27 (48.21%) are researchers, and 29 (51.78%) are faculty members. Regarding Rajiv Gandhi National University of Law, Patiala, there are exactly equal numbers of faculty members and research scholars—26 total—among the 52 responses. The table also unequivocally shows that Ram Manohar Lohia National Law University, Lucknow, has the largest number of responders overall—73—among other national law universities. Of these, 22 (30.13%) are faculty members and 51 (69.86%) are research scholars.

6. DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

6.1 Awareness of E-resources

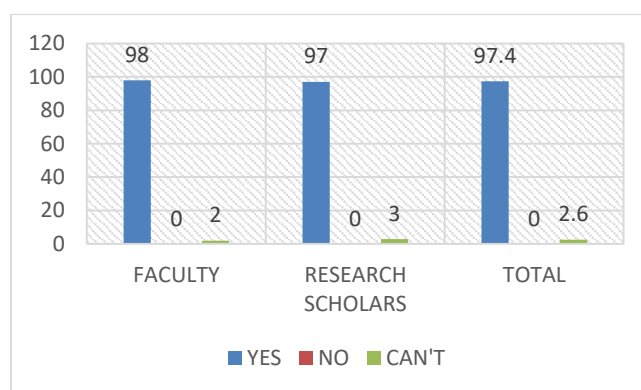
Table 5.2 assesses awareness of faculty members and research researchers at National Law Universities of North India about electronic resources and databases in the field of law.

Table 5.2: Awareness about Electronic Resources/Databases in the Field of Law

			YES	NO	CAN'T SAY	TOTAL
Total	Designation	Faculty	98	0	2	100
			98.0%	0.0%	2.0%	100.0%
	Research Scholar	131	0	4	135	
		97.0%	0.0%	3.0%	100.0%	
	Total	229	0	6	235	
		97.4%	0.0%	2.60%	100.0%	

Source: Primary Field Survey

Figure 5.1: Awareness about Electronic Resources/Databases in the Field of Law

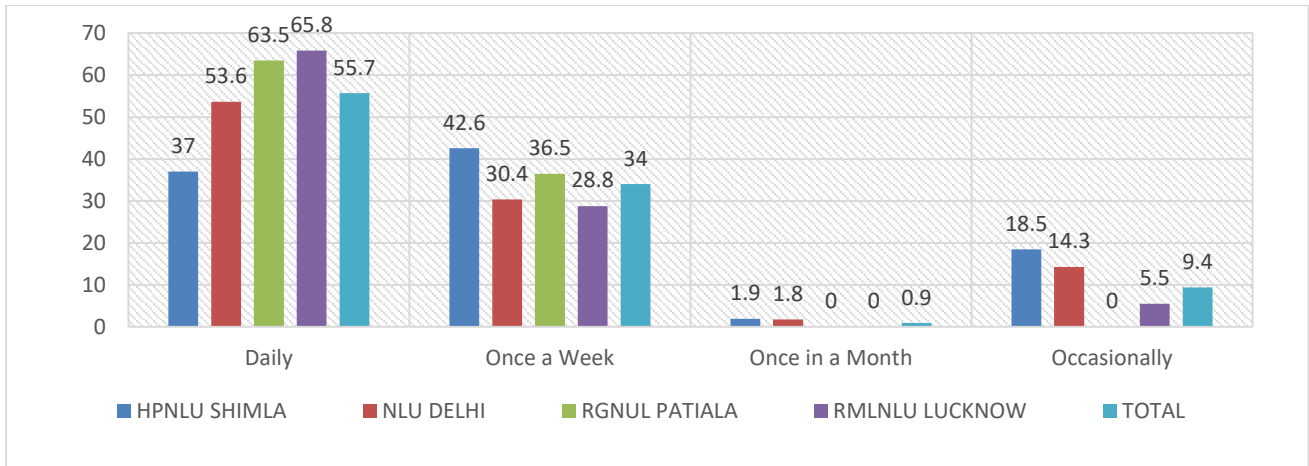


According to Table 5.2, 97.4% of the faculty members and research scholars across all four National Law Universities possess knowledge of electronic resources related to the field of Law. This awareness is encouraging and recognizes the work that libraries and information centers have done to raise awareness of e-resources through a variety of outreach initiatives, including user orientation and information literacy training. Research scholars and faculty members' understanding of e-resources is greatly aided by the accessibility and availability of the Internet in the ICT age. This suggests that faculty members and researchers are well-versed in the electronic resource materials available in the ICT environment.

6.2 Frequency of use of E-resources

Table 5.15 looks into how frequently faculty members and research scholars at National Law Universities of North India use electronic resources. It asks them how often they use the resources daily, weekly, monthly, or occasionally.

Figure 5.2: Frequency of using E-resources



The aforementioned figure also demonstrates how faculty members and research scholars use electronic resources on a daily, weekly, or sporadic basis. Very few or none of them use electronic resources on a monthly basis, suggesting that they use them frequently for their research needs. The analysis reveals that research scholars and faculty members have different preferences when it comes to how frequently they use e-resources.

6.3 Location for accessing E-resources

Figure 5.3 details the preferred locations for faculty members and research scholars at National Law Universities of North India to access electronic resources, including the university library, on-campus computer centers, and off-campus access. Research scholars prefer off-campus access to e-resources (89.6%), while faculty members prefer to access them on campus (97%) according to Figure 5.3. In addition, 82.2% of research scholars say they prefer using the university library to access e-resources, compared to

only 70% of faculty members.

This analysis demonstrates that there are variations in the locations where faculty members and research scholars access electronic resources. While research scholars prefer remote access to e-resources, faculty members typically prefer on-campus access.

6.4 Preference for Different Type of Databases in Research

In Figure 5.4, an analysis of the types of legal databases that faculty members and research scholars at National Law Universities of North India prefer is shown. Legal databases have been divided into four categories: Open access, E-journal based, Case Law databases and Hybrid databases (covering journals, case law databases, law reform, and all other types of legal sources).

Figure 5.3: Preference of Places for Accessing E-resources Consolidated

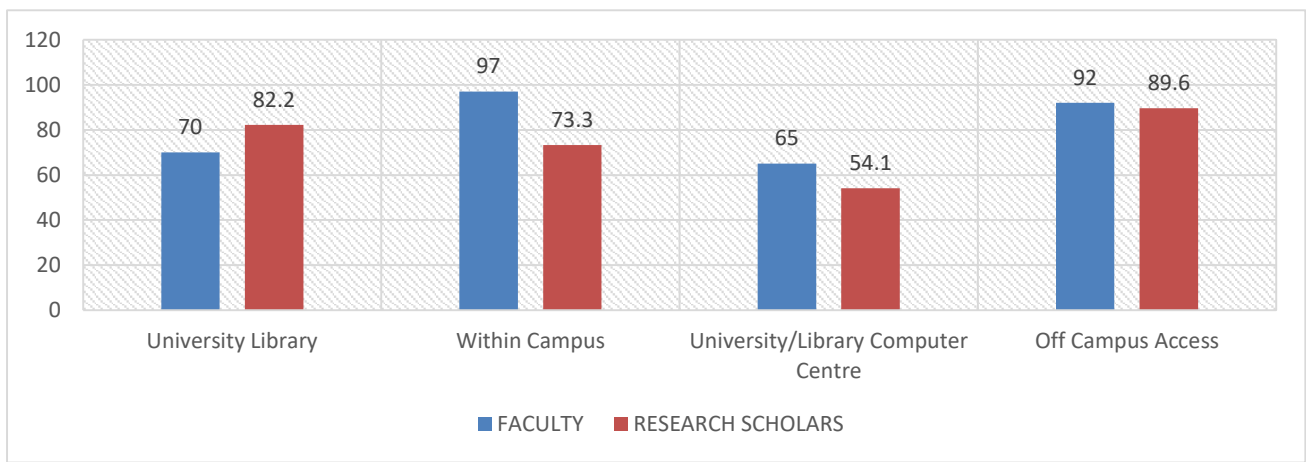
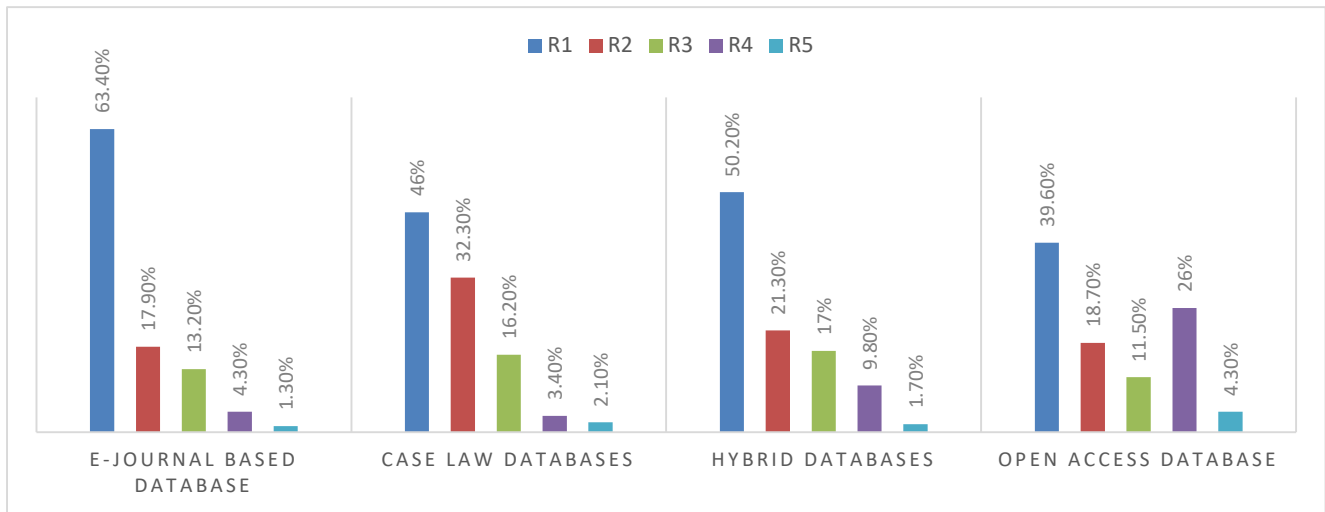


Figure 5.4: Preference for Different Type of Databases



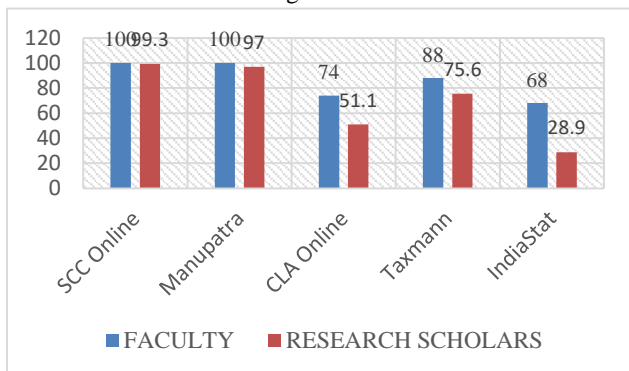
Faculty members have clearly assigned Rank 1 to the E journal database, as Figure 5.4 demonstrates. 63.4% of faculty members and research scholars ranked the E-journal database as #1. With 32.3%, the Case law database has been awarded rank 2. Hybrid databases have a rank of three, with 17%.

The table above makes it evident that, among other database types, the E-journal database is ranked first, and that faculty members and research scholars primarily search this database.

6.5 Most preferred Indian Law Database

Figure 5.5 describes how faculty members and research scholars at the respective National Law Universities of North India are aware of Indian databases that contain Indian legal information.

Figure 5.5: Awareness about Indian Databases Containing Indian Legal Information



SCC Online is the most well-known Indian database overall, according to the analysis and Figure 5.5, which show that both faculty members and research

scholars like it 100% and 99.3%, respectively. With 100% of faculty members and 97% of research scholars, Manupatra ranks second. In comparison to the two Indian databases mentioned above, faculty members and research scholars are less familiar with Taxmann (88% and 75.6%), CLA online (74% and 51.1%), and India Stat (68% and 28.9%), which comes in third place.

SCC Online and Manupatra are more well-known than the other three databases mentioned above, possibly because they cover the majority of legal information categories. This means that all legal information, including legislative materials, case law materials, legal scholarship, law reform reports, and more, can be found under these single database platforms. In contrast, the other three databases—Taxmann, CLA Online, and India Stat—only cover particular subject areas, like tax, statistics, and corporate laws.

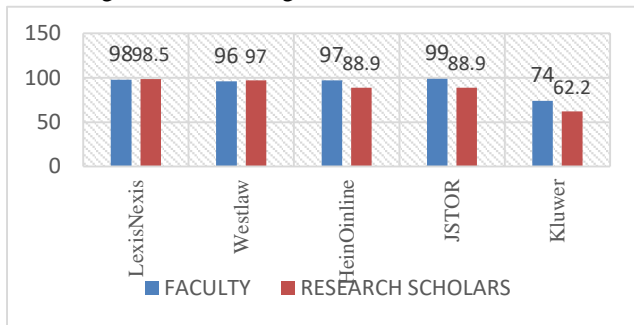
6.6 Most preferred International Law Database

The faculty members of the corresponding National Law Universities of North India are indicated in Figure 5.6 as being aware of international databases that contain international legal information.

The aforementioned analysis demonstrates that research scholars and faculty members have quite different preferences when it comes to international databases.



Figure 5.6: Awareness about International Databases containing International Legal Information



With 99% of faculty members using it, JSTOR is the most well-known international database; for research scholars, however, LexisNexis has 98.5% of users. LexisNexis, the first database of research scholars, is also a well-known database for faculty members. There is a degree of variation in the use of electronic resources by faculty members and research scholars, which may be due to their different research requirements, according to the analysis of their preferences for international legal databases.

6.7 Barriers in accessing E-resources

An analysis of the difficulties and issues encountered by research scholars and faculty at National Law Universities of North India when using e-resources is shown in Figure 5.7. Users typically encounter registration issues when attempting to access databases or e-resources, which require registration before accessing the material. This makes it more difficult to use the database or electronic resource. Additional difficulties or issues include slow Internet connections, which make it difficult to use e-resources. Other difficulties or obstacles encountered when using e-resources include a lack of support, restricted database

access, and occasionally malfunctioning remote access pages (which offer off-campus database access). The following Figure provide an evaluation of all these issues and challenges based on feedback from research scholars and faculty at National Law Universities of North India.:

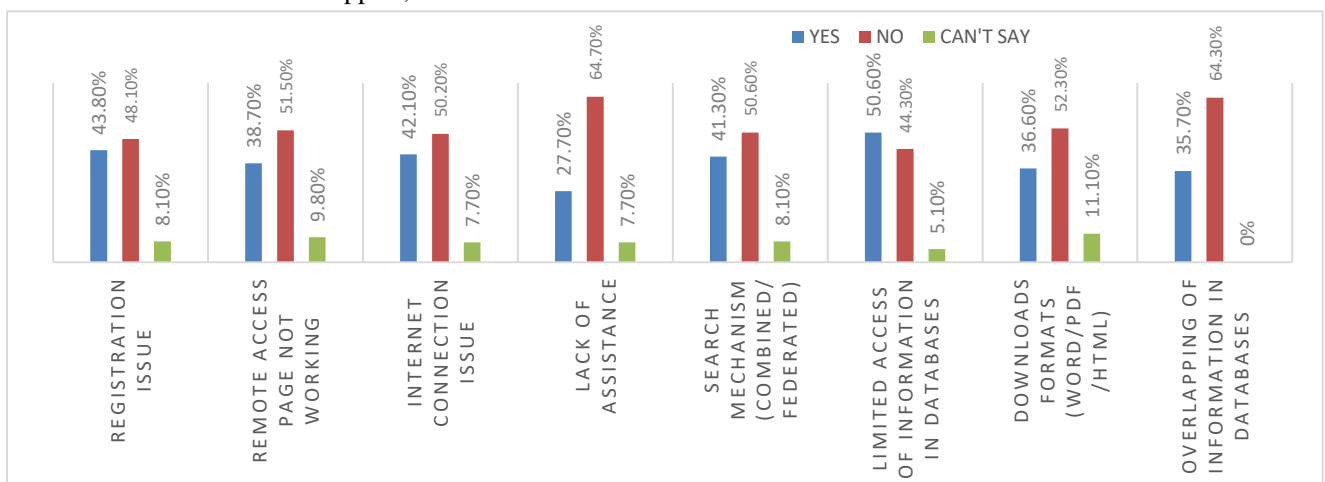
Based on the analysis above, it is evident that there are two main issues that faculty members and research scholars encounter when using e-resources: limited access to database information (50.6%) and registration issues (43.8%). The importance of libraries and information centers is highlighted by the need for them to step up and offer faculty and research scholars complete support when using e-resources. They should also establish connections with database providers to resolve issues related to database registration. To resolve the problems with Internet connectivity, they should also get in touch with the university's stakeholders. Libraries should be given the necessary funding so they can easily meet their basic needs, which include having access to the internet and reliable remote access software.

7. FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the responses of faculty members and research scholars at National Law Universities of North India, the study presents a number of findings:

- i. The study shows that faculty members and research scholars at select National Law Universities of North India have a high level of awareness
- ii. regarding electronic resources in the field of law. 97% research scholars and 98% faculty members

Figure 5.7: Challenges/Problems in Accessing E-resources



are well-versed in the Law database and electronic resources. This demonstrates the initiatives taken by libraries and information centers to increase user awareness of these resources by holding a variety of outreach events, including information literacy and user orientation programs.

- iii. The study reveals that researcher scholars and faculty members use electronic resources frequently for their research needs. When it comes to how often they use e-resources, faculty members and research scholars have different preferences, according to the analysis.
- iv. While research scholars prefer off-campus access to e-resources, faculty members prefer to use them on campus. While research scholars (89.6%) prefer off-campus access to e-resources, faculty members (97%) prefer to use them on campus. In addition, the study reveals that faculty members and research scholars favor the university library when using e-resources. Faculty members and research scholars differ to some extent regarding where they can access electronic resources. While research scholars prefer remote access to e-resources, faculty members generally prefer access within campus.
- v. 63.4% of research scholars and faculty members rated the E-journal database as the rank 1. The Case Law Database received rank 2 with 32.3%. At 17%, hybrid databases have a rank of three. It is clear from the above table that faculty members and research scholars are the main users of the E-journal database, which is ranked #1 among other database types.
- vi. Among faculty members and research scholars, SCC Online is the most well-known Indian database; all faculty members (100%) are aware of it. Similarly, SCC Online is the most well-known Indian database for research scholars, as reported by 99.3% of them. In second place is Manupatra. Taxmann comes in third. In comparison to the two Indian databases mentioned above, faculty members and research scholars are less familiar with CLA Online, which ranks fourth, and India Stat, which ranks last.
- vii. JSTOR, with 99%, is the most well-known international database for faculty members, while LexisNexis, with 98.5%, is the most well-known

international law database for researchers. There is a degree of variation in the use of electronic resources by faculty members and research scholars, according to an analysis of their preferences for international legal databases. Their disparate research needs could be the cause of this degree of variation.

- viii. The study also highlights the difficulties and issues that research scholars and faculty at National Law Universities of North India encounter when attempting to access electronic resources. When using e-resources, faculty members and research scholars encounter three main obstacles. Together, 43.8% faculty and research members claim that the main issue is the registration process for any database. However, 50.6% research scholars and faculty members agree that the main issue with using e-resources is the restricted access to information in databases.
- ix. In addition, 42.1% faculty members and research scholars concur that the main issue with using e-resources is a poor internet connection. The importance of libraries and information centers is highlighted by the need for them to step up and offer faculty and research scholars complete support when using e-resources. They should also establish connections with database providers to resolve issues related to database registration. To resolve the problems with Internet connectivity, they should also get in touch with the university's stakeholders. Libraries should be given the necessary funding so they can easily handle basic needs like internet access and reliable remote access software.

8. CONCLUSIONS

The study of law and related fields has undergone a dynamic shift due to the growing need for information among users and their increasing information needs. The resources and tools available for legal research play a crucial role in providing the most recent and relevant information. The field of law research has become very dynamic. In this era of information transformation, the growing use of electronic resources in the legal field and related fields has created new avenues for information sharing among the legal research community. This has put pressure on stakeholders to augment institutional resource volumes

in order to meet the research needs of their patrons. The use of electronic resources is growing daily in this era of information and communication technology, but users are also encountering several significant difficulties in doing so. One significant barrier to users' easy access to e-resources is internet connectivity. Programs for information literacy have been beneficial in helping legal researchers become more aware of and apt to use electronic resources. The most well-known Indian databases are SCC Online and Manupatra, while the most well-known international databases are JSTOR and Lexis Nexis. The National Law Universities of North India provide their patrons with state-of-the-art facilities. Users benefit from a 24/7 access to e-resources through the use of a remote access mechanism for off-campus access. To improve usage, NLUs should, nevertheless, uphold a set of policies and rules regarding encouraging users to access electronic resources.

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