

# **AWARENESS AND PERCEPTION OF LEGAL INFORMATION LITERACY OF THE LAW STUDENT AND FACULTY OF PANJAB UNIVERSITY OF CHANDIGARH**

**Sharandeep Kaur**

Research Scholar,

Library & Information Science Department,

Punjabi University Patiala-147002, India

Email-id :- [sidhusableen@yahoo.in](mailto:sidhusableen@yahoo.in)

**Abstract:** The primary purpose of this study was to determine the awareness and perception of legal information literacy among the law students and faculty of Panjab University, Chandigarh. It analyzed the awareness and perception of both information literacy and legal information literacy. The empirical study was conducted while using a survey design. A structured questionnaire was distributed among the cohort of the study both on-line and off-line mode. The study revealed that the percentage of awareness of information literacy of teachers, researchers, and LLB students is very high, i.e., (90%) in comparison to LLB students. The results of the investigation provide valuable information about the legal information literacy of law students and faculty.

**Keywords :** information technology, Information Literacy, Legal Information Literacy, Legal skills,

## **1.0 Introduction**

Information is a pivotal commodity for advancing human societies and enriching intellectual capital. Hence, the continuous development of information and communication technology significantly affects the flow of information, its organization, and use. Today, information generally flows through two main channels: first, controlled and organized assets of knowledge represented by libraries, information centers, archives and digital repositories. Second, uncontrolled and freely open platforms of information are represented by the wider internet and vastly growing web 2.0 and social media, which are tremendously enabled by advances in mobile technology. Freely passing information (e.g. texts, numbers, images, audio files, video files, multimedia etc.) has become a prominent and influential environment of information in terms of high use and acceptance among users, especially younger groups. In this regard, (Badke 2014) calls "information fog" described as the effect of Google and the Web in general (including social media) that creates a challenge to determining what information is genuine. Social media is becoming a major player in the way information is communicated and exchanged, which increases the importance of further research to better understand the information behavior of students, and its causes. Information literacy in practice means the application of the learn-how-to-learn approach to empower the learner by firmly placing the process of research under his/her responsibility (Badke 2014).

After the 1990's, the term "information literacy" became common in educational institutes at all levels. From the last decade, information literacy has been embedded in library programmes across all disciplines due to the need for technologically perfect students. By the mid-1990s, skill training in law had been changed noticeably from a continuum process of bibliographic instruction to information literacy in a specific discipline. This change is highly influenced by the implementation of information technology in education. Due to the amorphous mass of digital information in the field of law, Law fraternity and librarians feel anxious for precision, because of law disciplines tends to special more and more.

The legal information landscape has changed. Legal research skills are no longer enough to meet the information needs of the law fraternity. Good information skills can play a vital role for lawyers in the information-rich world in which they live and work. Johnston and (Webber 2003) clearly state, "Information literacy is the adoption of appropriate information behavior to identify, through whatever channel or medium, information well suited to information needs, leading to the wise and ethical use of information in society". The emergence of information technology since 1990, an increasingly popular use of e-resources and legal databases. The accession of legal research instructions goes side by side with information literacy in library and information science subjects but

misleading in other areas. An early discussion of the relationship between legal research and information literacy outlined the range of literacies that were being pursued as isolated strands that had a common core that needed to be drawn together. These were information technology literacy, computer literacy, library literacy, and information skills. An early study defines legal information literacy as searching skills, evaluative skills and ICT skills (Andretta, 2001).

Christensen and Kift have argued that we will produce better law graduates if we adopt programmes that integrate both conceptual knowledge and transferable generic skills. Information literacy in the law curriculum has been developed in many law schools to improve legal research skills.

In order to help law students, a group of American law librarians started working on a set of "law student research competency and information literacy principles" for the executive board. In general, the implementation of information literacy in the legal field is as follows:

- Recognizing the authentication of Internet-based sources.
- Understand the variety of search engines and ask the right queries in the right manner.
- Analyze the search results.

Different legal workplaces have different clients and varying requirements, but information literacy is a core lifelong skill that is necessary in all legal environments (Bird, 2011). Traditional legal research instruction emphasized only specific skills to use documentary and digital resources. Legal information literacy emphasized on broader applicability for life long.

The BIALL legal information statement aims to enable law students, at both the academic and vocational stages of training, to develop a five-stage model. (BIALL Legal Information Statement, July 2012). The model includes the following five stages.

Research skill 1: Demonstrate an understanding of the need for the investigation of all relevant factual and legal issues involved in a research task.

Research skill 2: Demonstrate the ability to undertake systematic and comprehensive legal research.

Research skill 3: Demonstrate the ability to analyze research findings effectively

Research skill 4: Demonstrate the ability to present the results of research in an appropriate and effective manner.

Research skill 5: Continuing Professional Development- refreshing the legal research skills required of a modern lawyer.

In addition, interdisciplinary studies have emerged within the discipline of law, like socio-legal studies, law and economics, law and politics, and legal philosophy, that require broader skills. Law librarians must ensure that the users of the library know how to access, select, evaluate, and get best use from the digital resources.

## **2.0 Review of Literature**

Aalam & Mugade (2016) emphasized the inclusion of ICT in legal education and research. This study intends to comprehend the amount of librarian involvement and activities in law colleges in order to aid law students in developing their legal information literacy abilities. It has been discovered that the majority of librarians (80%) participate in a variety of activities utilizing various instructional modalities and covering a wide range of subjects. The study's findings showed that academic law librarians in India are engaged in initiatives to improve legal information literacy, but education programs should be carried out in partnership with academic staff to guarantee suitable examples and explanations.

Jamshed & others (2021) determine the law library usage for information seeking among the law students in public sector universities of Punjab, Pakistan. It examined law students' needs for legal knowledge, their visit goals, the services that were offered, and the main issues that they encountered in the law libraries. It examined the law students' needs for legal knowledge, their visits' goals, the services that were offered, and the main issues that they encountered in the law libraries. Students go to the law library once a month. It also turns out that using the legal library is primarily for finishing up homework projects and getting ready for tests. The study highlighted

significant issues that law students encountered in law libraries, such as the absence of legal research journals. The study also makes recommendations for changes that would assist law libraries function better and, in turn, would help Pakistan's legal education standards rise.

Andretta (2001) examines the growth of an information literacy module at the University of North London for first-year law students. First-year students performed poorly in component 1, which required evaluative and analytical skills, while performing poorly in component 2, which was characterised by the dualistic approach of using the "right" search strategy to produce the necessary information. This illustrates the paradox of developing IL skills in first-year students while also acknowledging the limitations of their cognitive development at this stage.

Umar & Habib (2022) examined the information literacy programs on the use of legal information resources by undergraduate law students at Bayero University, Kano. The study concluded that some information literacy programmes like library orientation, library tour, and course-related instructions are available. The lack of regular information literacy programmes and unwillingness to incorporate information literacy programmes into the curriculum are some of the factors that affect the information literacy of the university. The study revealed that information literacy can only be achieved through collaboration with faculty members and the provision of regular information literacy programs.

Miranda & Magistratura R. N. (2017) described the management of the legal information collection. The offered observations reveal that the function of law libraries is to share this information volume within the institutions of which they are a part in order to support judgments made during ongoing judicial proceedings. In order to aid in decision making, the collection is updated and maintained with a heavy emphasis on the selection and evaluation criteria.

### 3.0 Objectives of the Study

- i. To discover the awareness and perception of information literacy of law students and faculty of the Panjab University, Chandigarh.
- ii. To discover the awareness and perception of Legal information literacy of law students and faculty of the of Panjab University, Chandigarh.

### 4.0 Scope of the Study

The study is based on data collected through a questionnaire. The questionnaires were sent to Panjab University, Chandigarh the respondents of Panjab University are divided into four categories: teachers, research scholars, postgraduate and undergraduate students.

### 5.0 Research Methodology

The survey method was used to carry out this quantitative investigation. The population of this study consists of teachers, research scholars, and postgraduate and undergraduate students of the law department of Panjab University, Chandigarh. A random sampling technique was used to collect data from the population through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed among the students, research scholars, and teachers of Punjab University, Chandigarh through on-line and off-line mode. Out of 100 questionnaires, 80 questionnaire received back with a response rate of (80%).

### 6.0 Data Analysis and Findings

#### 6.1 Demographic Information

The personal details section of the questionnaire provides information regarding gender, which is shown in table 1.

**Table: 1. Demographic Information**

Sr. No.	Gender	Teachers	Research Scholars	LLM students	LLB students
1	Male	3(30%)	4(40%)	13(65%)	22(36%)

2	Female	7(70%)	6(60%)	7(35%)	18(30%)
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Filled-in questionnaires were received from 10 teachers of whom (30%) were male and (70%) were female. Out of 10 research scholars, (40%) represented by males and (60%) represented females. In the cohort of LLM students, the majority (65%) consists of males and only (35%) are females. Out of 40, (36%) are male and (30%) are female.

## 6.2 Awareness of Information Literacy

The cohort of respondents of Panjab University were asked about their awareness and perceptions of information literacy. The responses received are presented in the table below:

**Table 2: Awareness of information Literacy and Perceptions**

Awareness	Teacher	Research Scholars	LLM students	LLB students
Aware	9(90%)	9(90%)	18(90%)	30(75%)
Not Aware	1(10%)	1(10%)	2(10%)	10(25%)
Information Literacy Perceptions				
Reading /writing literacy	10%	20%	20%	12.5%
Information search skills	20%	10%	20%	22.5%
Computer literacy	20%	20%	10%	7.5%
Digital literacy	10%	00%	15%	7.5%
Network literacy	00%	10%	15%	12.5%
Cultural literacy	10%	10%	25%	05%
All of above	70%	90%	30%	55%

It was interesting to find that the majority of teachers, research scholars, and LLM students are aware of information literacy as (90%) and LLB students are (75%). Information literacy is an umbrella term. The majority of teachers and researchers, respectively (70%) and (90%) select all of the above options, which means they know all components of information literacy. But undergraduates' opt-in information search skills component is (90%).

## 6.3 Awareness of Legal Information Literacy

It is clear that awareness holds the key to success. We are living in the world of information technology era. Users get confused when seeing overloaded information. In such a competitive world, it is essential that we become empowered with information literacy or information literacy in a specific subject. An attempt has been made in this study to explore the awareness and perceptions of legal information literacy.

**Table 3. Legal Information Literacy**

Awareness	Teacher	Research Scholars	LLM students	LLB students
Aware	9(90%)	9(90%)	19(95%)	24(60%)
Not Aware	1(10%)	1(10%)	1(5%)	16(40%)
Information Literacy Perceptions				
Researching and drafting reports	00%	00%	05%	10%
Preparation of court cases	00%	00%	05%	15%
Litigation	00%	00%	10%	15%
Negotiation	00%	00%	05%	17.5%
Legal drafting	00%	00%	10%	10%
Legal research using electronic database	00%	00%	25%	10%

Legal research using printed resources	00%	00%	05%	05%
All of them	100%	100%	65%	65%

Basically, legal information literacy is some set of abilities to navigate the needs of legal information, to identify what is relevant or important, to evaluate it critically for authenticity and scope, and then to use the relevant source effectively and in a proactive manner. This table gives interesting results. When awareness of legal information literacy is checked, it is found the response rate of three categories, like teachers, research scholars, and LLB students, is above (90%). The opinion of the respondents was sought to know their perception about legal information literacy, (100%) of teachers and researchers knew all the components of legal information literacy, and (65%) law students were aware of these.

#### 6.4 Respondents' opinion about legal information literacy improvements

Law students and faculty of Panjab University were asked to give suggestions for improving legal information literacy among law fraternity.

**Table: 4 Legal Information Literacy Can Improve Through**

	Teachers	Research Scholars	LLM students	LLB students
Lectures by a specialist	20%	20%	20%	32.5%
Seminars/ conferences	20%	30%	20%	30%
Training/ workshops	20%	20%	20%	47.5%
One to one /group instruction	10%	00%	15%	15%
Online tutorials	20%	30%	05%	10%
All of them	50%	50%	50%	30%

The majority of respondents, like teachers, researchers, and postgraduates i.e. (50%) are suggested all methods, like lectures by a specialist, seminars/conferences, training/workshops, one-to-one or group instruction, and online tutorials for improving legal information literacy. Only (30%) of undergraduates are suggested all methods to improve LIL.

#### 6.4.1 To determine the complexity of a legal task.

The main motive of this question is to check the respondent's opinion regarding the complexity they face in their legal research work.

**Table :5 What in Your Opinion Determines The Complexity Of A Legal Task**

The majority of respondents like teachers, researchers and postgraduates i.e. (50%) are suggested all methods Like Lectures by a specialist, Seminars/ conferences, Training/ workshops, one to one /group instruction, Online tutorials for improving legal information literacy. Only (30%) of undergraduates are suggested all methods to improve LIL.

	Teachers	Research Scholars	LLM	LLB students
Lack of familiarity with a case	50%	60%	45%	40%
Complexity of applying case law	40%	40%	40%	37.5%
Complexity of the subject matter	50%	60%	25%	30%

The majority of research scholars, i.e., 60%, faced a lack of familiarity with a case in their legal research work.

The majority of teachers, researchers, and LLM students, i.e., (40%) faced the complexity of applying case law, and above (50%) faced poor legal research skills.

The study found that almost all law students and law faculty agree that LIL is an important concept and should be an integral part of the law curriculum. Because legal literacy should harmonize with legal skills, students must empower themselves during their studies.

The study also discovers (100%) of cohort of this research project are aware about the RTI (Right to information). RTI is being taught to students in the law course. That's why they are well known to RTI. Similarly, if LIL were integrated as a part of the curriculum, it would prove more worthwhile for law faculties and university libraries.

## 7.0 Conclusion

This study was conducted to determine the awareness of legal information literacy of law students and faculty of Panjab University, Chandigarh. The study analyzed the different aspects of legal information seeking by law students and faculty. This study concluded that Panjab University have adequate infrastructure, good awareness of legal information literacy, and a positive attitude of law students and faculty towards it. Due to the rapidly changing digitized education environment of law students, it has become necessary to implement legal information literacy into the law curriculum.

Information literacy is a metamorphosis process that lies at the core of lifelong learning, and it empowers individuals in all walks of life to get information from relevant information, critically evaluate, and use it in their personal, social, occupational, and educational goals. Information literacy competencies adapted to make applicable in legal research skills.

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