

Information Needs of Distance Learners of Bangladesh Open University: A Study

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Abstract

This study tries to explore the information needs of distance Learners of Bangladesh Open University. It examines the reasons that are involved behind arising from distance learners various information needs. It tries to specify the sources that the distance learners use to meet their different information needs. The study finds that distance learners need various information for pursuing education as well as the learners of formal educational institutions. It also finds that distance learners information needs are arise always maintaining the theory provides by Robert S. Taylor, N.J. Belkin, R.N. Oddy, H.M. Brooks, B. Dervin, Nilan and C.C. Kuhlthau. Finally the study traces out the problems that the distance learners faced for getting their required information.

Keywords: Bangladesh Open University; Distance Education; Information Needs; Library Services.

Introduction

At present, human civilization is passing such an era where information and use of information play vital role. Every man or person uses information for performing every activity related to daily personal life, individual progress, proper communication, social welfare, economic development, political awareness etc. In short, information is necessary for all step or phase of life every time, every where, whenever someone wants to do anything or initiated to act any function for his/her survivals. Considering this, information is regarded as resources. It is such an important component that helps to develop, to enrich, to enlighten human life. The creation and application or use of information is not a new phenomenon. From the early age when the communication process began by human beings, the information is used as a communication tool and

helps to share, to transfer ideas from one person to another, one generation to another and took part in creating new knowledge in making decisions and in solving problems. But information is valueless until it is exactly relevant to the needs. In other words, information need is the basic thing that inspired someone to search, to find out something for meeting any goal. Information is used or the necessity of searching and collecting information is arising while the information need creates i.e. based on the information needs, search and use of information begin. Information need is an express or unexpressed statement where a person or group of persons has an intention to display or try to present the necessity of information required for achieving specific or more objectives, goals and tasks. On the basis of information needs the activities of searching, locating, identifying, obtaining, recalling and disseminating of information started. Information needs are regarded as the inner motivation of human body and mind that are disclosed or wanted to be disclosed while information is treated as the only key component for improving and developing a situation. Because of the information need, people inspired, initiated and felt the necessity of using information. The concept information need was coined by an American information scientist Robert. S. Taylor in an article namely "The process of asking questions"[1]. Kuhlthau (1993) defines Information needs as

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stemming from a vague awareness of something missing and as culminating in locating information that contributes to understanding and meaning [2]. In 1982, Belkin, Brooks & Oddy define information need as an anomalous state of knowledge [3]. Dervin and Nilan explained information need "a gap in individual's knowledge in sense making situations" in 1986 [4].

Like traditional learners, distance learners need information for completing each and every activity related to acquire knowledge and to conduct their education properly. Without any prior instruction or guidance provided by any instructor, the distance learners form information need to do his/her defined task. For that reason, every distance learner needs to give special considerations while designing the area of information need. Library, study centre, instructor, departmental office and notice board, radio and TV news are the main source where they search for getting their required information. Distance learners feel the necessity of information related with various subjects, fields or areas of interest. In Bangladesh, the activities of distance education began by the Bangladesh Open University (BOU). It played a pioneering role to familiar this type of education system throughout the country. From the beginning, BOU takes various remarkable initiatives such as develop course curriculum, student support services, mode of education etc. to establish and popularize this education among the mass people of this country. But BOU provides less emphasis on the identification of distance learner's information needs, an important component of designing any user-oriented system. As a result, the decisions or plans taken by BOU are less accepted by the learners. In most cases, these plans are not convenient to the distance learners' community regarding their necessity, objectives and economic status. It cannot able to develop the information disseminating processes that are suitable highly for the distance learners till today. Considering all these aspects, this study has been done to help BOU in making decisions and solving problems as well as for the development of the distance education systems in Bangladesh.

Objectives of this study

The objectives of this study are;

- a. to trace out the reasons of arising information needs of distance learners.
- b. to find out the information needs of distance learners.
- c. to specify the sources that are used by the distance learners to get their required information.

- d. to identify the problems that are faced by the distance learners for getting information

Methods

The core objective of this study is to know the information needs of distance learners of Bangladesh Open University. It also tries to find out the techniques that the BOU learners used to meet their different categories of information needs. From this point, this study is an exploratory one that deals qualitative data only. In the academic year 2015-16, about 4535 students got admission under BA/BSS program 2nd year in RRC, Rajshahi [5]. All those students under BA/BSS program 2nd year are regarded as population for this study. Out of 9 Regional Resource Centres (RRC) only RRC, Rajshahi is chosen purposively for this study. From the population, only 200 students (male 150 and female 50) of this program are treated as a sample for this study purposively. The core data of this study has been collected with the help of a structured questionnaire. Both open and close-ended questions are included in the questionnaire. Besides questionnaire, interview and observation methods are used to collect data for this study. The secondary data has also been gathered through consulting high officials and staffs of BOU. The theoretical framework of this study has been developed by reviewing existing literature relevant to the study area like books, journals, newspaper, articles etc. All the collected data has been analyzed with the help of Excel by using computer and presented in theoretical and tabular forms.

Results

The Table 1 shows that all the investigated distance learners mention the necessity of new information is the main reason for the arisen of their information need. About 87% learners opine that they feel information needs for improving the current state of knowledge. On the other hand, 93.5% mention that solving the problems at hand is the reason for arising their information need. From the Table 1 it is also said that 83% distance learners indicate expanding the information presently obtained is the reason for arising their information need. Moreover, 89% feel the necessity of information to validating the information presently known and 84.5% require information for clarifying the information that they obtained from different sources.

Table 2 presents that most of the distance learners (59.5%) need information daily. About 23% distance learners feel the need of information weekly while only 17.5% requires information monthly.

Table 3 depicts that most of the distance learners i.e. 77.5% need academic information almost always. About 75% surveyed respondents opine that they require instruction information almost always while 74.5% need facilities information. On the other hand, 64.5% distance learners express that they need documentary information almost always. It is also found from the table 3 that 61% distance learners need library information almost always. The table 3 also shows that 24.5% distance learners need contact information frequently while academic information is needed frequently by the 20% distance learners. About 9% distance learners opine that they need library information sometimes while only 6% mention that they need instruction information sometimes.

Table 4 reveals that the highest number of respondents i.e. 85% needs institutional information for knowing the authenticity of the institute. Out of 200 sample learners, 179 (89.5%) opine that they require institutional information for removing confusions while 69% need this type of information for identifying goodwill or reputations. About 47% respondents say that they require institution information for knowing the reasons behind the establishment of the institute. On the other hand, about 35% opine that they need this information for specifying uniqueness of the institution.

Table 5 indicates that 25.5% distance learners need information regarding location sometimes while 59.5% need such information occasionally and 9.5% frequently. About 32.5% learners respond that they need vision and mission of the institution sometimes while 39% need information regarding vision and mission occasionally and 6.5% frequently. From the Table 5 it is also said that 12.5% sample respondents need history and biography of the institution frequently while 51% need this information occasionally and 18% hardly ever. The Table 5 also presents that 14.5% distance learners need information regarding ranking sometimes. On the other hand, only 13.5% learners feel the need of information related to the future plan of the institution sometimes and 44% need this type of information occasionally.

Table 6 shows that 94.5% distance learners need contact information for sharing ideas with someone. On the other hand 91.5% respondents need such type of information for solving a problem. About 88.5% sample learners opine that they need this information for gaining clear concept of a matter. The Table 6 also mentions that 87.5% respondents need this

information for getting instruction from someone. A larger number of sample respondent i.e. 85.5% specify that they need contact information for receiving information from someone.

Table 7 refers that 53.5% distance learners need individual information sometimes while 21% need such information occasionally and 9.5% need frequently. The Table 7 also presents that 61.5% respondents need institutional information sometimes. On the other hand, 19% learners require institutional information occasionally and 7.5% need this type of information frequently.

The Table 8 indicates that majority numbers of respondent i.e. 83.5% need academic information for knowing teaching-learning activities. About 81.5% distance learners require such information to inform academic notice. On the other hand, 83.5% sample respondents opine that they need academic information to know the personal progress. About 68% learners respond that they require academic information for estimating cost, expenditure, and grant. The table 8 also presents that the higher numbered respondent i.e. 76% need information related to academic for developing their study plan.

Table 9 presents that higher portion of distance learners i.e.44.5% need information related to education systems occasionally while 21.5% need such information sometimes and only 19.5% frequently. 57% learners need administration and registration oriented information frequently. About 44.5% learners opine that they need information regarding course curriculum frequently. The Table 9 also shows that 36.5% distance learners need information related to academic supports & facilities sometimes while 26.5% need this type of information almost always. About 49.5% learners mention that they need information regarding date of examination, result & transcript frequently while 51.5% opine that they need fees and finances oriented information frequently. Information regarding scholarship and financial aid is needed by 50.5% sample respondents sometimes, on the other hand, a larger portion of learners (46.5%) mention that they need information regarding seminar and workshops hardly ever.

From the Table 10, it is said that 90% distance learners need library and study facilities while only 25% need training facilities. About 84.5 sample respondents opine that they need computer and IT facilities on the other hand 75% need laboratory facilities. The Table 10 also shows that sample learners (69%) need counseling facilities. Only 29.5% learners say that they need online learning and 35% need audio and video conferencing facilities. From the Table 10, it is said that a higher number of

respondents i.e. 54.5% sample learners do not need online learning facilities and 41.5% comments negative regarding audio and video conferencing facilities. The Table 10 also presents that a larger portion of respondents (68.5%) need media services.

The Table 11 indicates that 61% sample respondent need instruction information for preparing assignment. About 70% respondents opine that they need instruction information for knowing procedures required to do a defined task. A larger portion of learners i.e. 70.5% need instruction information for gaining clear concept of a matter while 64% need this type of information for submitting the assignment. The higher numbers of respondents i.e. 72% mention that they need instruction information for using library properly. The Table 11 also reveals that only 33% distance learner need instruction information for searching materials from the internet.

From the Table 12, it is said that the larger number of respondents i.e. 86% need library related information for reading. As reflected in the table, there was only 23% learners need library related information for recreation and only 26% for browsing. About 83% learners opine that they need information regarding library resources. The Table 12 also presents that out of 200 sample respondents, the higher number of learners i.e. 87.5% need information for lending documents from the information centre or library.

The Table 13 shows that higher number of student i.e. 90.5% learners need information regarding library collection. About 98.5% sample learners opine that they need information related to library services. From the Table 13 it is clear that majority of the respondents i.e. 67% do not need information regarding library websites. On the other hand, about 76.5% learners opine that they need information related to library fees and other charges, membership etc. The Table 13 also presents that 90.5% respondents need information about library equipment while only 16.5% need information regarding training. A large number of students i.e. 90% require information about the library facilities while 82% marks that they need information on library rules and regulations.

Table 14 reveals that out of 200, a higher number of distance learners i.e. 94.5% needs documentary information for knowing clear concepts on a subject or a topic. About 89% learners opine that they need documentary information for preparing answer to a defined question while only 6% mention that they do not need documentary information for knowing procedures required to do a defined task. The Table 14 also shows that 87% sample respondents' needs

documentary information for preparing assignment and tutorials. As observed, there was indeed clear concept regarding the necessity of documentary information where only 8% learners mention that they do not need this type of information for searching, locating and identifying a document.

Table 15 refers that higher number of respondent i.e. 79.5% needs bibliographical information. About 68% learners opine that they need catalog for getting documentary information. Only 10% sample respondent mention that they require index while only 14.5% need abstract for getting needed documentary information. It is said from the Table 15 that only 7% respondents need current awareness list. About 14% sample learners specify that they need content page for meeting documentary information. The Table 15 also represents that a large portion of respondents i.e. 60.5% and 53.5% do not mention any comment regarding index and abstract respectively. On the other hand, 29.5% and 32% learners do not need index and abstract for getting documentary information.

The Table 16 shows that 30.5% sample respondent use public library almost always while 46.5% uses this source frequently. About 48% learners go to RRC frequently for information on the other hand 34% go there almost always for the same purposes. A higher number of respondents i.e. 39% & 31.5% opine that they use radio and TV almost always and frequently respectively. As reflected in the table 16, there was a real situation is that BOU central library is used hardly ever by all of the sample learners. As a formal source study centre is used almost always by 35.5% sample respondents while 41% uses that source frequently. The Table 16 also indicates that 43% distance learners go to coordination office for information frequently while 27.5% go almost always for that purpose.

The Table 17 shows that 10.5% distance learners consult with library staff, instructors and experts as informal sources almost always while 19.5% & 57% use these sources frequently and sometimes respectively. As an informal source only 2.5% sample learners communicate outside learners from formal education system almost always on the other hand 23.5% communicate with this source occasionally. The larger portion of learners i.e. 58.5% opine that they consult with outside learners from formal education system hardly ever. About 37.5% respondents opine that they discuss with classmates occasionally for meeting their different information needs. The Table 17 also indicates that most of the distance learners i.e. 97.5% attend seminar and workshop as informal sources hardly ever for meeting their information need.

Table 1: Reasons involved with arising information need

Name of reasons	Strongly disagree	Disagree	No opinion	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean
The need to solve a problem at hand	0	8 (4%)	5 (2.5%)	64 (32%)	123 (61.5%)	4.51
The need for new information	0	0	0	48 (24%)	152 (76%)	4.76
The need to increase the current stage of knowledge	0	11 (5.5%)	15 (7.5%)	42 (21%)	132 (66%)	4.48
The recognition of the existence of uncertainty	0	14 (7%)	23 (11.5%)	87 (43.5%)	76 (38%)	4.13
The need to clarify the information obtained	0	22 (11%)	9 (4.5%)	55 (27.5%)	114 (57%)	4.53
The need to validate the information presently known	0	13 (6.5%)	17 (8.5%)	69 (38.5%)	101 (50.5%)	4.29
The need to expand the information presently obtained	0	19 (9.5%)	15 (7.5%)	46 (23%)	120 (60%)	4.34

Table 2: Frequency of arising information need

Category	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Daily	119	59.5
Weekly	46	23
Monthly	35	17.5
Never	0	0

Table 3: Types of information required

Types of information	Hardly ever	Occasionally	Sometimes	Frequently	Almost always	Mean
Institutional information	125 (62.5%)	24 (12%)	23 (11.5%)	8 (4%)	20 (10%)	1.87
Contact information	82(41%)	52 (26%)	27 (13.5%)	29 (24.5%)	10 (5%)	2.17
Academic information	0	0	5 (2.5%)	40 (20%)	155 (77.5%)	4.75
Facilities information	0	0	4 (2%)	47 (23.5%)	149 (74.5%)	4.73
Instruction information	0	0	12 (6%)	38 (19%)	150 (75%)	4.69
Library information	0	06 (3%)	18 (9%)	54 (27%)	122 (61%)	4.46
Documentary information	0	4 (2%)	18 (9%)	49 (24.5%)	129 (64.5%)	4.52

Table 4: Reasons behind the necessity of institutional information

Category	Strongly disagree	disagree	No opinion	agree	Strongly agree	Mean
For knowing the reasons behind the establishment of the institute	26 (13%)	47 (23.5%)	33 (16.5%)	37 (18.5%)	57 (28.5%)	3.26
For specifying uniqueness	39 (19.5%)	55 (27.5%)	36 (18%)	25 (12.5%)	45 (22.5%)	2.91
For removing confusions	3(1.5%)	3(1.5%)	15 (7.5%)	69 (34.5%)	110 (55%)	4.40
For knowing authenticity of the institute	0	7 (3.5%)	23 (11.5%)	44(22%)	126 (63%)	4.45
For identifying goodwill or reputations	10(5%)	23 (11.5%)	29 (14.5%)	49 (24.5%)	89 (44.5%)	3.92

Table 5: Category of institutional information need

Category	Hardly ever	Occasionally	Sometimes	Frequently	Almost always	Mean
History and biography of the institution	36 (18%)	102 (51%)	27 (13.5%)	25 (12.5%)	10 (5%)	2.36
Vision and mission	33 (16.5%)	78 (39%)	65 (32.5%)	13 (6.5%)	11 (5.5%)	2.46
Achievements	56 (28%)	120 (60%)	16 (8%)	5 (2.5%)	3 (1.5%)	1.90
Organizational charts	28 (14%)	157 (78.5%)	9 (4.5%)	4 (2%)	2 (1%)	1.98
Location	4 (2%)	119 (59.5%)	51 (25.5%)	19 (9.5%)	7 (3.5%)	2.53
Ranking	68 (34%)	95 (47.5%)	29 (14.5%)	5 (2.5%)	3 (1.5%)	1.90
Future plan	73 (36.5%)	88 (44%)	27 (13.5%)	8 (4%)	4 (2%)	1.91
Sustainability	75 (37.5%)	107 (53.5%)	16 (8%)	2 (1%)	0	1.73

Table 6: Reasons behind the necessity of contract information

Reasons	Strongly disagree	disagree	No opinion	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean
For getting instruction from someone	2 (1%)	9 (4.5%)	14 (7%)	51 (25.5%)	124 (62%)	4.43
For receiving information from someone	6 (3%)	10 (5%)	13 (6.5%)	33 (16.5%)	138 (69%)	4.44
For sharing ideas to someone	2 (1%)	4 (2%)	5 (2.5%)	42 (21%)	147 (73.5%)	4.64
For making decision by consensus	17 (8.5%)	23 (11.5%)	27 (13.5%)	45 (22.5%)	88 (44%)	3.82
For solving a problem	5 (2.5%)	6 (3%)	6 (3%)	39 (19.5%)	144 (72%)	4.56
For gaining clear concept about a matter	3 (1.5%)	5 (2.5%)	15 (7.5%)	36 (18%)	141 (70.5%)	4.54

Table 7: Category of contract information need

Category	Hardly ever	Occasionally	Sometimes	Frequently	Almost always	Mean
Individual: Name, Position, Designation, Phone number, Postal address, E-mail address	17 (8.5%)	42 (21%)	107 (53.5%)	19 (9.5%)	15 (7.5%)	2.87
Institutional: Postal address, E-mail address, Website address	11 (5.5%)	38 (19%)	123 (61.5%)	15 (7.5%)	13 (6.5%)	2.91

Table 8: Reasons behind the necessity of academic information

Reasons	Strongly disagree	disagree	No opinion	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean
To know teaching learning activities	5 (2.5%)	12 (6%)	16 (8%)	48 (24%)	119 (59.5%)	4.32
To inform academic notice	8 (4%)	9 (4.5%)	20 (10%)	42 (21%)	121 (60.5%)	4.3
To know personal progress	5 (2.5%)	11 (5.5%)	17 (8.5%)	51 (25.5%)	116 (58%)	4.31
To develop study plan	4 (2%)	25 (12.5%)	19 (9.5%)	55 (27.5%)	97 (48.5%)	4.08
To estimate cost, expenditure and grant	26 (13%)	22 (11%)	16 (8%)	63 (31.5%)	73 (36.5%)	3.68

Table 9: Category of academic information need

Category	Hardly ever	Occasionally	Sometimes	Frequently	Almost always	Mean
Education systems	3 (1.5%)	89 (44.5%)	43 (21.5%)	39 (19.5%)	26 (13%)	2.98
Admission & registration	0	0	15 (7.5%)	114 (57%)	71 (35.5%)	4.28
Course curriculum	3 (1.5%)	5 (2.5%)	76 (38%)	89 (44.5%)	27 (13.5%)	3.66
Academic supports & facilities	5 (2.5%)	30 (15%)	73 (36.5%)	39 (19.5%)	53 (26.5%)	3.53
Date of examination, result & transcript	7 (3.5%)	10 (5%)	28 (14%)	99 (49.5%)	56 (28%)	3.94
Fees and finances	5 (2.5%)	9 (4.5%)	46 (23%)	103 (51.5%)	37 (18.5%)	3.79
Scholarship and financial aid	25 (12.5%)	52 (26%)	101 (50.5%)	12 (6%)	10 (5%)	2.65
Seminar and workshops	93 (46.5%)	64 (32%)	25 (12.5%)	13 (6.5%)	5 (2.5%)	1.87

Table 10: Reasons behind the necessities of information related to facilities

Category	Strongly disagree	disagree	No opinion	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean
Training	89 (44.5%)	34 (17%)	27 (13.5%)	24 (12%)	26 (13%)	2.12
Counseling	18 (9%)	21 (10.5%)	23 (11.5%)	101 (50.5%)	37 (18.5%)	3.59
Computer and IT facilities	4 (2%)	6 (3%)	21 (10.5%)	76 (38%)	93 (46.5%)	4.24
Library & Study facilities	3 (1.5%)	7 (3.5%)	10 (5%)	83 (41.5%)	97 (48.5%)	4.32
Laboratory facilities	9 (4.5%)	13 (6.5%)	28 (14%)	69 (34.5%)	81 (40.5%)	4.00
On line learning	63 (31.5%)	46 (23%)	32 (16%)	26 (13%)	33 (16.5%)	2.60
Audio and video conferencing	44 (22%)	39 (19.5%)	47 (23.5%)	36 (18%)	34 (17%)	2.89
Media services	16 (8%)	22 (11%)	25 (12.5%)	98 (49%)	39 (19.5%)	3.61

Table 11: Reasons behind the necessities of instruction information

Category	Strongly disagree	disagree	No opinion	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean
For preparing assignment	14 (7%)	29 (14.5%)	35 (17.5%)	52 (26%)	70 (35%)	3.68
For using library properly	6 (3%)	23 (11.5%)	27 (13.5%)	79 (39.5%)	65 (32.5%)	3.87
For filling up application form	35 (17.5%)	33 (16.5%)	39 (19.5%)	51 (25.5%)	42 (21%)	3.16
For searching materials from the internet	37 (18.5%)	46 (23%)	51 (25.5%)	39 (19.5%)	27 (13.5%)	2.87
For submitting assignment	12 (6%)	23 (11.5%)	37 (18.5%)	45 (22.5%)	83 (41.5%)	3.82
For gaining clear concept about a matter	10 (5%)	21 (10.5%)	28 (14%)	64 (32%)	77 (38.5%)	3.89
For knowing procedures required to do a defined task	11 (5.5%)	12 (6%)	37 (18.5%)	69 (34.5%)	71 (35.5%)	3.89

Table 12: Reasons behind the necessities of library-related information

Category	Strongly disagree	disagree	No opinion	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean
For reading	4 (2%)	5 (2.5%)	19 (9.5%)	45 (22.5%)	127 (63.5%)	4.43
For information	5 (2.5%)	7 (3.5%)	21 (10.5%)	73 (36.5%)	94 (47%)	4.22
For recreation	31 (15.5%)	74 (37%)	49 (24.5%)	26 (13%)	20 (10%)	2.65
For browsing	37 (18.5%)	68 (34%)	43 (21.5%)	29 (14.5%)	23 (11.5%)	2.67
For lending documents	3 (1.5%)	8 (4%)	14 (7%)	89 (44.5%)	86 (43%)	4.24
For knowing about library resource etc.	7 (3.5%)	11 (5.5%)	16 (8%)	75 (37.5%)	91 (45.5%)	4.16

Table 13: Category of library-related information need

Category	Strongly disagree	disagree	No opinion	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean
Library hours	23 (11.5%)	44 (22%)	36 (18%)	41 (20.5%)	56 (28%)	3.32
Use of the library	14 (7%)	11 (5.5%)	38 (19%)	67 (33.5%)	70 (35%)	3.84
Library collections	0	6 (3%)	13 (6.5%)	85 (42.5%)	96 (48%)	4.36
Library services	0	0	3 (1.5%)	94 (47%)	103 (51.5%)	4.5
Library equipment	1 (0.5%)	7 (3.5%)	11 (5.5%)	83 (41.5%)	98 (49%)	4.35
Library facilities	0	6 (3%)	14 (7%)	89 (44.5%)	91 (45.5%)	4.33
Library rules and regulations	7 (3.5%)	9 (4.5%)	20 (10%)	78 (39%)	86 (43%)	4.14
Training	70 (35%)	59 (29.5%)	38 (19%)	24 (12%)	9 (4.5%)	2.22
Library fees and other charges, membership etc.	5 (2.5%)	11 (5.5%)	31 (15.5%)	84 (42%)	69 (34.5%)	4.01
Library web sites.	66 (33%)	68 (34%)	37 (18.5%)	17 (8.5%)	12 (6%)	2.12

Table 14: Reasons behind the necessities of documentary information

Category	Strongly disagree	disagree	No opinion	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean
For knowing clear concepts on a subject or a topic	0	5 (2.5%)	6 (3%)	68 (34%)	121 (60.5%)	4.53
For preparing answer of a defined question	3 (1.5%)	8 (4%)	11 (5.5%)	69 (34.5%)	109 (54.5%)	4.37
For preparing assignment, tutorials	4 (2%)	6 (3%)	16 (8%)	61 (30.5%)	113 (56.5%)	4.37
To search, locate or identify a document	9 (4.5%)	7 (3.5%)	5 (2.5%)	72 (36%)	107 (53.5%)	4.31
For knowing procedures required to do a defined task	3 (1.5%)	9 (4.5%)	21 (10.5%)	75 (37.5%)	92 (46%)	4.22

Table 15: Category of documentary information need

Category	Strongly disagree	disagree	No opinion	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean
Bibliographical information	7(3.5%)	11(5.5%)	23(11.5%)	72(36%)	87(43.5%)	4.11
Catalog	11(5.5%)	17(8.5%)	36(18%)	59(29.5%)	77(38.5%)	3.87
Index	22(11%)	37(18.5%)	121(60.5%)	11(5.5%)	9(4.5%)	2.74
Abstract	16(8%)	48(24%)	107(53.5%)	16(8%)	13(6.5%)	2.81
Current awareness list	27(13.5%)	45(22.5%)	114(57%)	9(4.5%)	5(2.5%)	2.60
Content page	21(10.5%)	33(16.5%)	118(59%)	17(8.5%)	11(5.5%)	2.82

Table 16: Use of formal information sources

Category	Hardly ever	Occasionally	Sometimes	Frequently	Almost always	Mean
BOU central library	200(100%)	0	0	0	0	1.00
Daily newspaper	7(3.5%)	47(23.5%)	22(11%)	69 (34.5%)	55 (27.5%)	3.59
Radio and TV	0	8(4%)	51(25.5%)	63 (31.5%)	78(39%)	4.06
Internet	129 (64.5%)	26(13%)	19(9.5%)	15(7.5%)	11 (5.5%)	1.77
Regional Resource Centre (RRC)	0	8(4%)	28(14%)	96(48%)	68(34%)	4.12
Public library	10(5%)	11(5.5%)	25(12.5%)	93 (46.5%)	61 (30.5%)	3.92
Coordinating office	9(4.5%)	17(8.5%)	33(16.5%)	86(43%)	55 (27.5%)	3.81
Study centre	6(3%)	13(6.5%)	28(14%)	82(41%)	71 (35.5%)	4.0

Table 17: Use of informal information sources

Category	Hardly ever	Occasionally	Sometimes	Frequently	Almost always	Mean
Consultation with library staff, instructors and experts	9 (4.5%)	17 (8.5%)	114 (57%)	39 (19.5%)	21 (10.5%)	3.23
Outside learners from formal education system	117 (58.5%)	47 (23.5%)	19 (9.5%)	12 (6%)	5 (2.5%)	1.71
Discussion with classmates	13 (6.5%)	75 (37.5%)	56 (28%)	37 (18.5%)	19 (9.5%)	2.87
Attend seminar and workshop	195 (97.5%)	5 (2.5%)	0	0	0	1.03

Table 18: Level of satisfaction regarding information obtained from different sources

Category	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Very satisfied	0	0
Satisfied	11	5.5
Less satisfied	34	17
Dissatisfied	155	77.5

Table 19: Problems faced to meet information need

Category	Respondents	Percentage
Lack of instruction and guidance facilities	164	84%
Lack of counseling support	138	69%
Inadequate library and information services and facilities of BOU	169	84.5%
Absence of permission for using libraries of formal educational institution	148	74%
Shortage of information and communication technology facilities	136	68%
Unavailability of lending facilities	167	83.5%
Improper information dissemination process	164	82%

Table 20: Problems faced to meet information need

Category	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Respondents
Lack of instruction and guidance facilities	10 (5%)	13(6.5%)	20(10%)	35(17.5%)	30(15%)	28(14%)	32(16%)	168(84%)
Lack of counseling support	24(12%)	38(19%)	19(9.5%)	16(8%)	17(8.5%)	13(6.5%)	11(5.5%)	138(69%)
Inadequate library and information services and facilities of BOU	3(1.5%)	17(8.5%)	16(8%)	32(16%)	33(16.5%)	31(15.5%)	37(18.5%)	169(84.5%)
Absence of permission for using libraries of formal educational institution	5(2.5%)	7(3.5%)	15(7.5%)	27(13.5%)	23(11.5%)	40(20%)	31(15.5%)	148(74%)
Shortage of information and communication technology facilities	34(17%)	32(16%)	29(14.5%)	16(8%)	10(5%)	8(4%)	7(3.5%)	136(68%)
Unavailability of lending facilities	6(3%)	19(9.5%)	22(11%)	26(13%)	36(18%)	28(14%)	30(15%)	167(83.5%)
Improper information dissemination process	12 (6%)	13 (6.5%)	38 (19%)	32 (16%)	25 (12.5%)	18 (9%)	26 (13%)	164 (82%)
	94	139	159	184	174	166	174	1090

Note: 1 = number-1 problem treated by respondents; 2 = number-2 problems treated by respondents and so forth.

The Table 18 presents that the larger portion of distance learners i.e. 77.5% are not satisfied regarding the information got from different formal and informal sources. Only 5.5% sample learners opine that they are satisfied with the information gathered from different sources. Out of 200 sample only 34 i.e. 17% mention that they are less satisfied with the information sources used for meeting their different information needs. The Table 18 also shows that no one of the sample learners is very satisfied regarding the information received from different sources.

The Table 19 indicates that the higher number of distance learners i.e. 84.5% suffer to meet required information because of inadequate library and information services and facilities of BOU. About 84% learners opine that because of the lack of instruction and guidance facilities distance learners cannot meet their required information properly. 83.5% sample learners mention that unavailability of lending facilities is an important factor that hindered to get their information properly. The Table 19 also mentions that 82% sample learners faced problem in getting information because of improper information dissemination process. About 69% learners say that lack of counseling support is the reason that hindered them in getting their required information. A large portion of respondents i.e. 74% specifies that they cannot meet their required information because of the absence of permission for using libraries of the formal educational institution. About 68% learners mentioned that the shortage of information and communication technology facilities is the problem for getting their required information.

Findings of the study

1. All the distance learners feel the necessity of information need. Various reasons are involved to arise these information need. The mean from table 1 proves that getting new information, increasing the current stage of knowledge, solving a problem at hand, expanding the information presently obtained etc. are basic factors that work in arising their information need highly.
2. Maximum distance learners feel the need of information daily.
3. On an average, distance learners need academic, instruction, facilities, library and documentary information. On the other hand, contact and institutional information are needed by the 41% and 62.5% distance learners hardly ever.
4. Distance learners need institutional information for knowing the authenticity of the institute, removing confusions and for identifying goodwill or reputations of the institution.
5. Distance learners need institutional information occasionally. From different categories of information related to the institution, they need vision and mission information, location, future plan, ranking, history, and biography of the institution sometimes.
6. Distance learner needs contact information for sharing ideas with someone, receiving information from someone, solving a problem, gaining clear concept about a matter and for getting instruction from someone.
7. Distance learners need contact information. They feel the necessity of contact information sometimes. Distance learners need both individual (Name, Position, Designation, Phone number, Postal address, E-mail address) information and institutional (Postal address, E-mail address, Website address) information. Distance learners do not need contact information almost always and hardly ever.
8. Distance learners need academic information for various reasons. To know teaching-learning activities are the vital reason for the necessity of their academic information that mentioned by higher numbered respondents i.e. 83.5%. It is also found from this study that distance learners need academic information for informing academic notice, knowing personal progress, developing the study plan and for estimating cost, expenditure, and grant.
9. Distance learners need academic information regarding admission & registration, course curriculum, examination, result, transcript, fees, and finances frequently. Sometimes they need information on academic supports, facilities, scholarship and financial aid. They need information related to education systems occasionally. They need information regarding seminar and workshops hardly ever.
10. Distance learners of BOU need library & study facilities for continuing their study. They need counseling, computer and IT and laboratory facilities also. They do not feel the necessity of online learning and audio and video conferencing facilities highly.
11. Distance learners need instruction for academic purposes such as submitting an assignment, gaining clear concept about a matter, knowing procedures required to do a defined task, preparing assignment etc. They need this type of information for using library properly rather than for searching materials from the internet.

12. Distance learners need information regarding library for reading, for getting information, for lending documents and for knowing about library resource etc. They provide less emphasis in getting library related information for recreation and for browsing.
13. Distance learners need information about library resources, services, equipment and facilities highly rather than the information regarding library websites and training. They also feel the need of information related to library rules and regulations, library fees and other charges, membership, and use of the library.
14. Distance learners need documentary information for knowing clear concepts on a subject or a topic. They also need this type of information for preparing answer to a defined question, assignment, tutorials, for searching, locating or identifying a document and for knowing procedures required to do a defined task.
15. Rather than index, abstract, current awareness list and content page, distance learners need bibliographical information and catalog for getting their documentary information.
16. Learners of BOU use the public library, coordinating office, RRC, study centre, Radio and TV and daily newspaper as formal information sources. They use BOU central library hardly ever.
17. Distance learners consult with library staff, instructors and experts for meeting their information need. They also discuss with classmates for gathering new knowledge and information and for sharing each other required to pursue their education.
18. Distance learners are not satisfied regarding the information they got from different formal and informal sources.
19. The BOU distance learners face various problems when they try to meet their information needs. This study ranks from 1 to 7 of their problems. The table-20 mentions that the top first problem of the distance learners is inadequate library and information services and facilities of BOU. The second problem that they specify is the absence of permission for using libraries of the formal educational institution while the third one is the unavailability of lending facilities.

Conclusion

Compared with other resources, information is treated not only as resources but also as the basic key

component that always supports to develop and enrich every person. Without information, man cannot live as they cannot do anything without food, health, cloth, shelter education etc. According to Chen and Hennon, information is all knowledge, ideas, fact, data and imaginative works of mind which are communicated formally and informally in any format [6].

Information is used in tracing, defining and solving problems, in taking decisions, perceiving clear conception, arranging a conversation, offering teaching-learning activities and in doing research for achieving better results or performance and act as a pivot amount which any development revolves or any action performs. Taylor defines seeking answers is an important reason behind the arises of information need of a man/person in 1968 [7].

In 1978, Nicholas j. Belkin, explore that when a person recognizes that there is an anomaly (i.e. a gap or uncertainty) in his/her state of knowledge regarding a situation or topic, then he/she arises information needs [8]. So the availability of sources of information, easy accessibility of information and quick dissemination of information should be ensured to all. All people should have the opportunity to get proper information at the right form at the right time. Distance learners are different from the traditional learners in terms of age, educational qualification, profession, mentality etc. Because of the lack of direct communication and interaction, proper education facilities, direct teaching-learning benefit distance learners cannot get proper direction as traditional students got from formal educational institutions. They need information for completing each and every activity related to acquiring their education properly. Information needs of distance learners are of different kinds. It varies from one to one. The Necessity is the basic object upon which they arise questions and problems and develop or generate problem-solving mechanism. Due to various reasons information needs of a distance learner are different from others. Age is an important factor that influences in creating various categories of information needs. Because of various educational qualifications, the needs of S.S.C, H.S.C, graduate, postgraduate level students are always differ from each other category.

The information needs of students of social science are not the same of students of science. Information needs are also differ from distance learners to learners because of the social position that he or she holds. They need such a teaching- learning environment where each and every learner gets information, document, instruction, guidance, inspiration required to achieve their goal. So BOU needs to trace out

distance learners needs and analyze these to formulate techniques that are helpful to meet learners' information needs easily, quickly and timely with cost-effective and cost benefit.

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