

Awareness on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Skills among the Lawyers of District Courts in Andhra Pradesh: A Study

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***Abstract** - Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has become the sine qua non of efficient and development in the 21st century. The legal profession plays an important role in the administration of justice. The present study was undertaken with a view to know the status of e-resource and Internet use pattern of practicing lawyers. For that purpose, survey method has been adopted by the investigators, which comprises of administration of questionnaire and interview of participants for knowing the awareness of e-resource and Internet use pattern of Lawyers. The filled up questionnaires have been collected from the respondents for the data analysis and interpretations. A majority i.e.,88.01% respondents opined that Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) have made the information-seeking and gathering process easier for them and 11.99% of them opined that ICT has made this difficult. 64.34% lawyers use the Internet daily, 18.15% lawyers use once in a week, 8.27% lawyers use once in a fortnight,6.32% respondents visit once in a month and the remaining 2.92% are rarely use the Internet.*

Keywords: Lawyers, Courts, Information, Internet, e-resources, Networks.

1. Introduction:

The Information Technology revolution is largely seen as the technological response to the emergence of many sectors, including law and the increasing source value of information. The reason for increasing information consciousness among lawyers and the concern for legal information management is due to complicated litigations and interpretation of existing laws in alignment with societal problems/issues. The use of computer with relevant software will help the lawyers to access law collections, store, and process communication as well as transmit legal information more effectively and accurately. With this intention, the investigation seeks to know the attitude of lawyers and their levels of awareness /skills required for retrieving and processing the information and communication technologies. The law dictionary defines the lawyer as “a person learned in the law as a counselor solicitor”. In this study, the ‘Lawyer’ is a person who is practicing legal matters in District Courts.

2. Objectives of the study:

The objectives of the present study are:

1. To find out the impact of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) on the information needs and information-seeking behaviour of lawyers.
2. To examine the places of access for information.
3. To find the level of satisfaction among lawyers with regard to the various network-based legal information services.

3. Methodology:

The present study selected survey method to complete work. The primary focus of the work is to study awareness of ICT skills and Usage Patterns of the Lawyers in the District Courts of Andhra Pradesh. There are 13 District courts in Andhra Pradesh. This study only confined to district courts not any other courts of the state. Nearly 4470 lawyers have registered their names practicing in the district Courts. Since the population is too large to study due to time and cost constraints, a sample of 894 (20% of the total population) practicing lawyers has been drawn from the total population by the simple random method. However, the investigator received 617 (69% of the sample) questionnaires from respondents only. Data was also collected from the annual reports of law libraries, other records maintained by them and also by interviewing some of the law officers.

4. Review of Literature:

Kim and Seo (2015) explore the information-seeking behavior among lawyers and its impact on their law practice. This study seeks to find out reasons for studying the applicability of prior analyses to attorneys' practices in recent times. This study performed surveys and interviews with 21 practical attorneys in South Korea who were grouped by their experience, period and the size of their law firms. This study concludes that the role of the work in Leckie et al. model still affects the information-seeking behavior among attorneys even today. Moreover, the attorney's experience and the size of law firms as variables also make an impact on the behavior of an attorney. In fact, this study further finds that the attorneys prefer digital information in online database and formal information like statutes or case laws. These results are definitely different from the prior studies. In addition, this study suggests that certain behavior such as meaningful use of informal information in difficult situations result in improper information, adversely impacting the information-seeking behavior among attorneys.

Nirmal Singh and Amarvir Singh (2015) conducted a study on information seeking behaviour of lawyers of the High Court of Punjab and Haryana. The study revealed that under the influence of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) a majority of respondents are using Internet to access information. At the same time, the significance of print format has not declined as three-fourth of the respondents prefers both print as well as e-resources to find the required information. The study concluded with the need for library professionals to adopt a pro-active approach in meeting the information requirements of law professionals.

Thanksukodi (2011) conducted an analytical study on user awareness on use of e-resources in High Court of Madras. For the last few years, free online information sources like e-journals, e-books, e-databases have increased considerably. The traditional library

systems have started getting transformed into digital library systems. In fact, information-seeking is important for lawyers, who have access to many dedicated electronic resources. The Internet and CD-ROM were the most frequently used IT-based resources and facilities. This study reveals that a minimum 3-4 hours of access to the internet is quite common among the respondents who comprised government advocates and junior advocates. Results of the present study show that senior advocates rank in the first position with respect to their overall preference for using legal CD-ROM databases, whereas independent advocates come second, the panel advocates the third, government advocates the fourth and junior advocates the last.

Analysis and Interpretation of the Data

Table -1: Distribution of respondents according to gender

S.No	Gender	Number	Percentage
1	Male	502	81.36
2	Female	115	18.64
Total		617	100

It is evident from above table that out of 617 advocates, 502 (81.36%) are male and 115 (18.64%) are female. It shows the relative representation of the male and female advocates.

Table-2: Distribution of respondent's knowledge of computer usage/ Internet

S.No	Response	Number	Percentage
1	Yes	617	100
2	No	--	--
Total		617	100

Table 2 explains 99 % of the lawyers indicated familiarity with computer usage and Internet usage.

Table-3: Distribution of respondents according to the availability of Internet facility

S.No	Response	Number	Percentage
1	Yes	617	100
2	No	--	--
Total		617	100

It is evident from table 3 that hundred percent of the respondents indicated having Internet facility for accessing the required information

Table-4: Distribution of respondents according to the frequency of using the Internet

S.No	Frequency of use	Number	Percentage
1	Daily	397	64.34
2	Once in a week	112	18.15
3	Once in a fortnight	51	8.27
4	Once in a month	39	6.32
5	Rarely	18	2.92
Total		617	100

It is evident from Table 4 shows that 397 (64.34%) lawyers use the Internet daily, 112 (18.15%) lawyers use once in a week, 51 (8.27%) lawyers use once in a fortnight, 39 (6.32%) lawyers visit once in a month and the remaining 18 (2.92%) of lawyers rarely used the Internet. It can be concluded that a majority of the lawyers use the Internet regularly.

Table-5: Distribution of respondents according to the time spent on the Internet

S.No	Time spent	Number	Percentage
1	Less than one hour	98	15.88
2	1 hour to 2 hours	339	54.94
3	2 hours to 3 hours	161	26.09
4	More than three hours	19	3.08
Total		617	100

It is evident from table 5 that 339(54.94%) respondents spend one to two hours on the Internet to access the required legal information.161(26.09%) respondents spend two to three hours, 98 (15.88%) respondents spend less than one hour and the remaining 19 (3.08%) respondents spend more than three hours on the Internet for accessing the legal information.

Table-6: Distribution of the respondents according to the place of access to the Internet

S.No	Places	Number	Percentage
1	Court Library	305	49.43
2	Home	286	46.35
3	Internet Café	26	4.22
Total		617	100

It is evident from Table 6 that 305 (49.43%) lawyer's access the Internet in the court library, 286 (46.35%) access at their homes and the remaining 26 (4.22%) access the Internet at Internet cafe.

Table-7: Distribution of respondents according to the search engines used for information seeking

S.No	Search Engines	Number	Percentage
1	Google	573	92.87
2	Yahoo	171	27.71
3	Google and Yahoo	339	54.94

(Multiple answers were preferred)

It is evident from Table 7 that 573 (92.87%) respondents use Google for seeking information, 339 (54.94%) use Google and Yahoo and 171 (27.71%) are found using yahoo in this regard.

Table8: Distribution of respondent's opinions about the impact of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) on information gathering process

S.No	Opinion	Number	Percentage
1	Easier	543	88.01
2	Difficult	74	11.99
Total		617	100

It is evident from table 8 that 543 (88.01%) respondents opined that Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) have made the information-seeking and gathering process easier for them and 74 (11.99%) of them opined that ICT has made this difficult.

Table-9: Distribution of respondents according to their information-seeking and retrieval skills while using the Internet

S.No	Opinion	Number	Percentage
1	Excellent	59	9.56
2	Very Good	81	13.13
3	Good	212	34.36
4	Fair	144	23.34
5	Poor	121	19.61
Total		617	100

It is evident from Table 9 that 212 (34.36%) respondents stated that their information seeking and retrieval skills were good while using the Internet, followed by 144 (23.34%) who rated fair, 121 (19.61%) rated as poor, 81 (13.13%) rated as very good and 59 (9.56%) rated their information-seeking and retrieval skills as excellent.

Table-10: Distribution of respondents according to their preferred format of information resource

S.No	Format	Number	Percentage
1	Print	139	22.53
2	Electronic	71	11.51
3	Both print and electronic	407	65.96
Total		617	100

It is evident from table 10 that 407 (65.96%) lawyers have preference for both print and electronic resources, followed by 139 (22.53%) having preference for the print format; and the remaining 71 (11.51%) having preference for the electronic format.

Table-11: Satisfaction of the legal information networks

S.No	Websites	Number	Percentage
1	www.supremecourtfindia.nic.in	371	60.13
2	http://hc.ap.nic.in/	511	82.82
3	www.judis.nic.in	44	7.13
4	www.legalserviceindia.com	54	8.75
5	www.scjudgements.com	123	19.94
6	www.lawadiv.com	12	1.95
7	www.allindiareporter.com	338	54.78
8	www.judgements-online.com	117	18.96
9	www.commonlii.org/in/cases/INSC	7	1.13
10	www.court.nic.in	44	7.13
11	www.indialawsite.com	11	1.78
12	http://lawmin.nic.in	9	1.46
13	http://kanoon.com	301	48.78

It is evident from Table 11 that a majority of the lawyers (82.82%) expressed satisfaction with the website of the Andhra Pradesh High Court, Hyderabad, i.e. <http://hc.ap.nic.in/>. Further, nearly 60.13 percent of the lawyers are satisfied with the website of the Supreme Court, i.e. www.supremecourtfindia.nic.in. The [allindiareporter.com](http://www.allindiareporter.com) and

kanoon.com are the other websites with which a majority of the respondents expressed their satisfaction.

Conclusions:

1. A majority of the lawyers i.e. 397 (64.34%) use the Internet daily, 112 (18.15%) lawyers use once in a week, 51 (8.27%) lawyers use once in a fortnight, 39 (6.32%) lawyers visit once in a month and the remaining 18 (2.92%) of lawyers rarely use the Internet.
2. A majority of the respondents i.e. 339 (54.94%) spend one to two hours on the Internet to access the required legal information. 161 (26.09%) respondents spend two to three hours, 98 (15.88%) respondents spend less than one hour and the remaining 19 (3.08%) respondents spend more than three hours on the Internet for accessing the legal information.
3. A majority of the lawyers i.e. 305 (49.43%) access the Internet in the court library, 286 (46.35%) access at their homes and the remaining 26 (4.22%) access the Internet at Internet café.
4. A majority of the respondents 573 (92.87%) use Google for seeking information, 339 (54.94%) use both Google and Yahoo, whereas 171 (27.71%) are found using yahoo.
5. A majority of the respondents i.e.543 (88.01%) opined that Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) have made the information-seeking and gathering process easier for them and 74 (11.99%) of them opined that ICT has made this difficult.
6. A majority of the respondents 34.36% stated that their information seeking and retrieval skills were good while using the Internet, followed by 23.34% who rated fair, 19.61% rated as poor,13.13% rated as very good and 9.56% rated their information-seeking and retrieval skills as excellent.
7. A majority of the respondents i.e. 407 (65.96%) have preference for both print and electronic resources, followed by 139 (22.53%) having preference for the print format and the remaining 71(11.51%) having preference for the electronic format.
8. A majority of the lawyers 82.82% expressed satisfaction with the website of the Andhra Pradesh High Court, Hyderabad i.e. <http://hc.ap.nic.in/>.

Suggestions:

1. The legal professionals and judges must have access to better Internet services and speed in order to gather current and updated legal information.
2. Legal information resources available in all other court libraries must be made accessible to all lawyers from different districts of Andhra Pradesh.
3. The information centre should provide extension services to make lawyers aware of the latest legal information sources and services. In order to help lawyers save time, the information centre should provide relevant information through modern Information Communication Technologies (ICTs).
4. All members of the legal fraternity i.e. lawyers, public prosecutors, legal advisors in state and district courts may be given free access to online search of the national and international legal databases.
5. Training in computer and Internet services should be provided to the lawyers for improving their ICT skills.

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