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*Information Need and Information Seeking Behavior*

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3.1 Introduction

With the constantly changing scenario, everything related to technical up-gradation and information seeking tools have improved. Faster means of communication are available. Information is the means, which helps us to cope up with these changes. It is said, a society rich in information and information seeking resources is rich in socio economic spheres. It not only shapes the society and creates its structure but also affects the elements, which constitutes it. The resources, of which the user is not aware, like the latest tools for retrieving information, cannot be used effectively. Thus, an updated knowledge of these information retrieving tools is the basic element for development.

Information is not restricted to printed words or words of mouth alone. It is also present in the form of artwork, color, gestures, facial expressions, and body movements. Information is the most powerful tool if it is organized and kept updated. Organized information is the power and strength of any and every system.

Development of information technology and communication technology has resulted in ever increasing expansion of the flow of information. With the invention of computer and communication technology also developed rapidly. It was due to this amazing invention that the dissemination of information on worldwide basis increased. Its extraordinary fast speed can be imagined by the fact that it can retrieve information within seconds. Moreover, these technologies are easily available at cheap prices. These factors cause free flow of information and are easily accessible to individuals. As a result, it is being used and applied all their work i.e. professional work, daily routine work and decision making process. Present scenario is an information based and technology dependent era. Quality work needs up-to-date information. It is not possible to do any type of work without any information. The updated information system has speed up the process of information transfer; Individuals are getting information at their doorstep in vast amount.
3.1.1 Information

Information is power, information is knowledge. Information is the core to everything that prevails in this world. It is part of our day to day lives. We receive information throughout the day. At the workplace, we receive and give information from and to our seniors, our peers and our subordinates. We call up family, friends and acquaintances to gather information on a variety of matters ranging from the weather forecast for the next twenty four hours to the best brand of washing machine available in the market; from the progress of a cricket match to the price of an air ticket to Goa. We visit the library and scan journals for information that would help us complete an assignment. With the ultra-unique and highly sensitive tools and systems, information travels at lightening fast speed. In short, there is no area of life that information does not touch.

“Information recorded or communicated knowledge gained by man through experience, observations and experiments. It has been growing in every increasing volume and rate. Basic nature of information is clouded by the fact that the word is used in variety of different contexts as under

- Information as a commodity
- Information as energy
- Information as communication
- Information as facts
- Information as data
- Information as knowledge”

3.1.2 Significance of Information

All human activities result in the creation of information which is mostly communicated through various media. It is absolutely necessary for information an information system to respond to environmental stimuli and acquire information to meet the requirements of user interests. Another significant and important aspect of information is the general acceptance that there should be free flow and exchange of scientific and technical information without any barriers. Information is viewed as an essential resource for all
economic and social change.
A user can approach to any channel to meet his/her needs. Sometimes user cannot express his/her needs or express them poorly. Satisfaction of these needs is possible in so many ways. One of them is through the libraries but the librarians or information officers cannot read his/her mind as the need appears in the mind of the enquirer only. It is a challenge for the information providers to assess user’s needs and provide them the exact information according to his/her needs.

Kawatra (1992) identifies some difficulties as

- Increasing amount and complexity of literature, and the expenses involved acquiring everything.
- Scattering of Literature.
- Language barriers.
- Access to Information.

It is impossible for the users to get hold of all the information that is available in a variety of formats. Another difficulty is to find information that is actually needed for such circumstances. It is considered as the responsibility of information professional to provide focused and filtered information, which corresponds to the users’ requirements. Information established the link between information sources and users. The factors involved in this link are

- Accuracy
- Relevancy
- Availability

To provide link between users and sources, information scientists must be acquainted with users of information system, their activities and their requirements. To provide accurate and relevant information to the users, information professionals/scientists need to conduct user studies after adequate and short period of time.

3.2 Information need

“Information need is an individual or group’s desire to locate and obtain Information to satisfy a conscious or unconscious need. The information needs are inseparable
interconnection. Needs and interests call forth information. With the deluge of available information, each person needs information of increasing variety. The information needs of a particular group of users and for a specific situation or organization are difficult to determine. There is not one simple system to cope up with all information needs. Library is the most widely-used source of information available to literate societies. Librarians must be aware of the kind of information being sought and how it can be obtained. Because of the rapidly escalating cost of purchasing and archiving print journals and electronic media, the library has the duty to provide and maintain efficient services” (Thanuskodi, 2009).

Information need is seen as a combination of two unique concepts categories regarding “information” and “need”. Some other words are closely related to the world ‘need’. These are ‘want’, ‘demand’, and ‘requirement’.

**Need:** “what a person ought to have for his/her research, his/her recreation, his/her education”.

**Want:** What a person would like to have.

**Requirement:** - A need, a thing needed; a necessary condition.

**Demand:** what a person asks for (What is asked for).

“Information demand is the total of all information needs of a distinct discipline or user groups.” (Kunz, Rittel and Schwuchow, 1977)

“An information demand is a request for an item of information believed to be wanted”. It is at this stage that information seeking starts. People consult an information source or information system to get information. Sometimes people demand things that are not really needed which means need is not actually demanded. Demand is partly dependent on expectations. Internet has played a very important role in raising expectations”. (Nicholas, 2000)

Difference between need and want is based on the concept that a person may not need what he wants. Some people do not differentiate between need, want and demand. According to Werner, however, distinction is a matter of concern. Users do not have self-awareness of need. They need things, which they do not actually need. They sometimes want what they do not need; similarly people do not always demand what they want.
(Tague, 1976) Information needs can be divided into the following categories.

**Social or pragmatic information needs**: - information required to cope up with day to day life.

**Recreation Information Needs**: - Information satisfies the recreational and cultural interests of an individual.

**Professional Information Needs**: - Information required for operating competently within a business or professional environment.

**Educational Information Needs**: - Information required for satisfying academic requirement at an institution.

Information need arises during learning process. When a user perceives or recognizes the presented knowledge they recall his/her previous knowledge and interpret it. At this stage manipulation occurs between the new and the previous knowledge. During this learning process, the information need arises which is sometimes not clear even to the enquirer.

“What an individual ought to have for his work, his research, his edification, his creation etc”. (Line, 1974)

“An information need is an impediment preventing an individual from moving forward in cognitive time and space. The person is faced with a gape that must be bridged by asking questions, creating ideas, and or obtaining resources, such gaps do not occur in the abstract but arise out of particular critical events and situations”. It depends on the type of activity and the role an individual plays in his life. Man plays different roles in his life; his information need vary according to his role. In the process of information seeking a user experiences many factors these are:-

- **Internal** e.g. thoughts and motivation
- **External** e.g. the activity of running on OPAC searches.
- **Un Related** To libraries e.g. asking a friend.
- **Aborted** Deciding that a need is not strong enough to warrant the effort necessary to satisfy it. (Dervin n.d)
3.2.1 Characteristics of Information Needs

(Choudhary, 1999) Characterizes information need as:-

- It is a relative concept. It depends on several factors and does not remain constant.
- Information needs change over a period of time.
- Information needs vary from person to person; from job to job, subject to subject, organization to organization and so on.
- People’s information needs are largely dependent on the environment for example; information needs of those in an academic environment are different from those in an industrial, business or government/administrative environment.
- Measuring (Quantifying) information need is difficult.
- Information need often either remains unexpressed or is poorly expressed.
- Information often changes on receipt of some information.

3.2.2 Types of Information Needs

There are three types of information need.

- **Expressed or articulated need**: The need that is expressed
- **Unexpressed need**: The user is aware clearly of his need but does not like to express it.
- **Dormant need**: The user is unaware about his need. However, information service provider brings to light these needs.

3.2.3 Factors of Information Need

Various factors affecting the user’s information need:-

- Academic environment of Colleges
- Recent Development
- Shrinking Budget and Increasing prices of Books and Periodicals.
- Increase in strength of the students
Changes in Course and Design
Changes in teaching and learning methods.
Student’s Psychology

(Nicholas, 2000) describes the factors affecting the information want. He named the following factor physical and personal factors of need.

- Motivation: - Individual may not be motivated to chase information.
- Time: - They may not have the time to look for it.
- Skill: - They have the skills to locate information.
- Access to information: - The user might not have access to the necessary information resources.
- Job Satisfaction: - He identifies the job satisfaction as a big determinant. If an individual likes his/her job and performs it with motivation, he/she will do well and keep themselves up to date. For this purpose, they will want seek information.

### 3.2.4 User Characteristics for Information Needs

(Nicholas, 2000) describes the following characteristics of a person

- Persistence
- Thoroughness
- Orderliness
- Motivation
- Receptiveness

These are the most influential factor. Persistent person is strong willed to search information. He tries again and again. In case of failure he applies new strategies. Some people search comprehensively on a topic. He collects all relevant information related to his topic. His search is exhaustive in nature. Some people are organized by nature. They keep all their information systematically in files and use it at times of need. Motivation is an essential factor in seeking information. A motivated person has strong desire to search. His motivation will compel him to search, find and use this information.
Information and information seeking is a complex phenomenon in which various factors are involved. The factors are related to the personality traits of a user, the profession to which he belong to, kind of activities, available time and facilities, his age, gender, these factors help in the information seeking process and cannot be separated from each other. Age is also an important factor. Age brings physical disability for example; a person may become less mobile as he becomes aged and might find it difficult to go to a library or information centre or search on the Internet. Excessive searching on Internet may cause some physical problems like eyestrain, backache, shoulder ache etc. This is the reason that the aged person lacks technological literacy.

Moreover, people do not get time in their busy schedule to meet their information needs. For some professionals like journalists, time is a very important factor. They are always in a big hurry. They need concise, precise and ready-made information urgently. Access to information sources and systems is very important. If these are available easily people are engaged more in information seeking. On the contrary, if a library or information centre is situated at a long distance from their residence people would hesitate to go there in order to obtain the information.

In this electronic age so many speedy and fast means of communication are available which are handy and easily movable like laptop and mobile phone. Flow of information has increased tremendously. Nicholas characterized it as an age of bombardment of information. It is very difficult to read all the information and filter the relevant information from it.

(Wilson, n.d.) Information need is recognized if we understand,

- The nature of organization.
- Organizational information need.
- Work in the organization.
- Personal information needs.

He constitutes all organization as “information and communication system”. (Whether they are government, non-government, business organization or media organization) All activities are based on information processing, information flow and record management.
Study of nature of organization helps in identification of the information needs.

All organizational activities based on information processing. Information need arise for processing of information. Every individual performs different types of activities in the organizations to fulfill his responsibilities. To understand the work in the organization their activities must be observed. Interaction with people is the best method to comprehend the work in the organization.

“Walking the organization is a well practiced management strategy for finding out what is going on. (Wilson, et al) “Talking to people about their work, their problems, observe flow of information find out how information sources are used are the methods by which information manager keep himself. Every person has working responsibilities, their working activities constitute some needs, and these needs are related to fill a knowledge gap, to resolve any problem. A person’s information needs are not only related to his duties, they also have effective needs in their jobs. (Wilson, et al) “They need to feel competent and assured in their roles, they may feel a need for achievement or ambition, and they may feel a need to dominate and central through the possession of greater knowledge”.

(Chaudhary, 1992) describes the following areas that help to identify the information needs of a user.

- Information about the organization/Institution
- Information about the user group
- Information about individual users.

He gives the questions identifier to know about the information about the organization user group and individual user.

1. **Information about the organization/Institution.**

Questions related to major objective of the organization, related field of organization, major division/group in terms of task activities performed, scope of activity, organizational need in general and what information is generated by it, major sources of information, major channels of information available computer and network facilities existing library/information centre, belonging to any national or international network,
plan for improving library/information system.

2. Information about user group

Users and user groups are major components of this process. He has given the following questions which help to know about the user’s group:

i. Identification of user group and their major activities.

ii. Groups linked among user group.

iii. Objectives, functions and subject background of the user group.

iv. Available information internally, from other organizations/institutions and from published/unpublished sources, and so on.

v. Information generated by each user group.

vi. If the activities of some group are hampered for some reason, how is this going to affect the performance of other user groups?

This information will help us optimize the system design and will help us draw an optimum information flow pattern.

vii. User-related constraints. Need to set priorities for providing services.

3. Information about individual users

His identification of information needs following information about users must be known. It helps us to know about the users and their information needs.

1. The education, training, experience.

2. The position and nature of the user’s job.

3. The role of the user in an identified user group.

4. The subject and associated interest of the user, nature of information, type of documents, journals, authors, language.

5. The language preference of the user.

6. The level of IT literacy.

7. The extent to which IT is used and what for. Does the user access any information system?

8. Membership of professional bodies.

9. The technical periodicals that the user receives through membership, subscription, etc.

10. The type of reports-external and/or internal-read by the user.
11. Reports that the user is to currently receiving but would like to receive.

12. Channels of communication between the user and other user(s)/group.

13. Frequency of use of the in-house library/information centre, time of the day and duration of time spent in the library/information centre.

14. Kinds of information sources currently used and preferred by the user, for example books, journal articles, reports, standards, patents, trade literature, business/company data legal documents, and so on.

15. Type of information services currently used/preferred by the user, for example, current awareness services, abstracts, digests, state of the art reports, literature search services (in house, on home-grown and/or CD-ROM databases: external, via remote database access such as database access and search facilities through electronic communication.

16. The user’s special role in the group/organization, such as the information gatekeeper.

17. Choudhary formulates detailed question that provide focused answer about organization, user group and individual users. These answers provide substantial help to understand the nature of organization, organization structure, and difficulties etc. They also inform us about the major activities of group work in the organization, information environment, and source of information and nature of information generated in the organization. Different working group in the organization and their nature of work is different. According to choudhary’s methodology, information provider identifies the various user group and nature of their activities.

18. Every user consults different sources to obtain information. This methodology explores the sources and channels of information the users consult and the knowledge about online resources and types of information services they use.

(Lingam and Devadason, 1997) describe following parameter for identification of information need:

- Study of subjects
- Study of organization and its environment
- Study of the user’s specific environment
- Study of the user
Study of subjects: - They prioritize the subject or discipline of the user/organization/system. For this purpose information need identifier must know definitions of the subject. Scope, division and subdivision, classification of the subject, historical development of the subject trend of research in the subject, important source of information.

Study of the organization and its environment: - to understand the needs of the users, second related parameter understands organization and its environment. For this purpose a profile of the organization is prepared in which type of organization where the users are working; for example corporate office, or industrial enterprise, public, private government, non government, profit making or nonprofit making organization. This information will help to know the management and decision making process by which information needs arise. Moreover they specify information about the study of the objectives, functions, organizational chart functions, activities, annual and internal reports.

Study of users’ specific environment: - According to them there is an overall environment which is under focus but there is a specific environment too in which the user works. To study the user’s specific environment following information must be obtained to understand their needs.

I. Background or history of the concerned unit/department, its objective and function.
II. Organizational structure.
III. Details of products and/or process
IV. Scope of each function of the department
V. Information flow.
VI. Present source of information and the channels and media used.
VII. Types of information
VIII. Specific subjects on which information is being sought.
IX. Recent significant events.
X. Training program.

Study of user: - user is the major component in identification of information needs. To
know the true needs of the user it is necessary to understand the user’s personality. They classify user into four groups.

**Potential User:** - The person who needs information, which might (or might not) be provided by specific services of the information facility.

**Expected User:** - The person who is known to have the intent of using certain information services.

**Actual User:** - The person who has actually used an information service regardless of whether he got any advantage from it or not.

**Beneficiary:** - The person who derives measurable advantage from information services.

User performs different activities. He works on different positions in the organization. Information need is a subject which is very difficult to define. It is not measurable, has a wide and vast scope and depends on various factors such as the personality of an enquirer, nature of his work and field. A user gets information to satisfy his needs which further creates a need.

### 3.3 Information Seeking Behavior

Every individual faces different problems in his/her daily life. Generally speaking these problems are related to children, education, household chores, recreation, professional responsibilities etc. To solve these problems recent and complete information is required. Huge amount of information is generated due to the ongoing development of research works. Consequently, information is disseminated rapidly on worldwide basis. Very appropriately it is called flood of information. There is a great need to control this flood. In today’s world every one must be information literate for selection of information source and information seeking strategies, access to information channels and verification of reliability of information sources, ensuring the relevancy according to their needs and use of information for solving the problems collectively, this is called “Human Information Behaviour”

The information seeking behaviour essentially refers to the strategies and actions undertaken to locate discrete knowledge elements. It is concerned with the integrative utilization of the three basic resources
People
Information
System

“It can be said that the behaviour which yields the highest information satisfaction is the best. We need information in every step of life; in our daily routine as well as in order to fulfill professional responsibilities. To fulfill this need the individual consults the information source and information source can be a person. At this stage interaction starts with a librarian, information officer or practitioner. If the seeker has a problem his need will be in his mind and he will ask questions to solve the problem. In return, the source may ask questions to understand his need. In this process source develops an understanding in which his previous knowledge, experience and resources are used. The source provides information for his use. Seeker compares that information with his need and as a result he might be satisfied or not. In case of satisfaction the interaction ends while in case of dissatisfaction, this process starts again with some other people at some other place. This whole process is called “interpersonal information seeking interaction”.

Yoon, describes information seeking as a mental and cognitive process because perception is developed using previous knowledge with new resources and personal interaction. Perception is expressed in the form of language code available to others. This information is generated in his mind through perception and he shares it with others. Information seeking behaviour also depends on motivation for need. If motivational level is high the seeking behavior will be active and strong.

“Most of the time Students and Faculty information seeking behavior involves active or purposeful information seeking as a result of the need to complete course assignments, seminars, prepare lecturer notes, workshops, conferences, or write final year research papers, write articles. Information seeking behavior refers to the way people search and utilize information” (Fairer-Wessels, 1990:361).

Information source can be a library, information center or a person. If information is personal they personally interact with colleagues, friends, teachers, librarians and subject experts etc to satisfy the information needs. Thus, we can say that information is a medium through which relationship are exchanged.
“Information seeking behaviour is expressed in various forms, from reading printed material to research and experimentation. Scholars, students and faculty actively seek current information from various media available in libraries e.g. encyclopedia, journals, books and more currently electronic media (Abels, 2004) mentioned that the frequency of use of Internet in 1998-2000 had greatly increased. Information seeking behavior involves personal reasons for seeking information, the kinds of information which are being south and the way and sources with which needed information is being sought. Information seeking behaviour is expressed in various forms, from reading printed material to research and experimentation”.

Scholars, students and faculty actively seek current information from the various media available in libraries, e.g. encyclopedias, journals and more currently electronic media. (leckie 1996).

“(Wilson, T. D) describe in his models of information seeking behaviour. The most cited model was development and used in 1971 as shown in Figure 1.

![Figure 1: Information need and seeking](image-url)
This figure 1 models the idea of the personal, social role, and environmental context that may give rise to a need for information. Of particular significance was the division of the 'needs' that give rise to information seeking behavior into physiological, affective and cognitive needs, and the suggestion that 'information needs' was an unhelpful concept for research purposes. The term 'information seeking behavior' was proposed because behaviour is observable, whereas 'needs' being internal mental states, are not. Wilson again developed a new general model of information seeking behavior, in 1996 for developing figure 1 and 2 models, reproduced as figure 3.

Figure 2: A revised general model of information seeking behavior (1996)

With the next model (Figure 3) presented in 1999, Wilson pointed out that information search behavior is a subset of information seeking behavior and that information seeking behavior is in turn only a subset of all possible information behavior. As such, the
existence of modes of information behavior, other than information seeking, is implied.

Figure 3: Wilson's 1999 nested model of information behavior

(Khulthau, 1998) characterizes information seeking as a concrete task in which demographic, social, professional, educational and behavioral characteristics are involved. He defines information seeking process as a process of construction. The user practices a new experience during seeking and using information. In this process, he understands his topic or problems, constructs his own perspective and makes relations between different things but during this process concepts are clearer to him. Information seeking is a process of learning in which the whole personality of the user is involved. The stages involved in this process are ‘thinking’, ‘dealing’, and ‘acting’. These are interrelated with each other.

3.3.1 Factors of Information Seeking Behavior

(Rouse and House, 1984) The factors that influence the human seeking behavior include:

I. Payoffs and costs
II. Resources available
III. Update rates;
IV. Amount of information available
V. Diagnosticity of data
VI. Distributional characteristics of data
VII. Conflicts among source
It may be emphasized that a correct appraisal of information seeking behaviour implies knowledge of:

- The purpose for which information is required
- Environment in which user operate
- User’s skill in identifying information need and information providers skill in providing information
- Channels and sources for tapping the information, and
- Barriers to information

### 3.3.2 Information Seeking in Context

There are many dimensions of information seeking behavior out of which information seeking behavior in context is very well known. Context means circumstances for e.g. time conditions, situation or frame of reference such as background framework or relation in which this phenomenon occurs.

### 3.3.3 Characteristics of Information Behavior

Ellis employed qualitative interviewing in identifying common characteristics of information behavior of researchers first in the social sciences, then in the physical sciences and in engineering. He found his set of characteristics applied with some slight expansion in the last study, to all these disciplines. (Ellis, 1987; Ellis, Cox et al., 1993; Ellis & Haugan, 1997) His characteristics are:

**Starting:** the means employed by the user to user to begin seeking information, for example, asking some knowledgeable colleague;

**Chaining:** following footnotes and citations in known material or “forward” chaining from known items through citation indexes;

**Browsing:** “semi-directed or semi-structured searching,“

**Differentiating:** using known differences in information sources as a way of filtering the amount of information obtained;

**Monitoring:** Keeping up-to-date or current awareness searching;

**Extracting:** selectively identifying relevant material in an information source;

**Verifying:** checking the accuracy of information;

**Ending:** which may be defined as “typing up loose ends” through a final search.
3.3.4 Information Seeking Behavior and Personality

Information seeking behavior has multidisciplinary perspectives and one of its dimensions is psychological. Personality which is a unique pattern of feelings, thoughts and behavior, forms through psychological mechanism and personality traits play an important role in developing behavior.


(Nahl, 2000) “Positive attitude and self confidence is required to use the information system other than technical skills. Information need may be satisfied or dissatisfied in seeking process. In case of dissatisfaction negative feeling arises, for example frustration, impatience, irritation and information overload.

(Kuhlthau, 1993) describes information seeking as a cognitive and emotional process of constructing a personal understanding of a topic. Information seeking is a psychological subject. It is highly concerned to behavior and attitude. If a person does not get information he might behave negatively.

(Olechnicki and Zalecki, 2000) “personality is defined as “a set of unique and relatively stable individual features of a person which express his/her identity and develops in a process of biological, psychological and social development by the person’s environment and his/her own cognitive activity”.

“Personality trait plays an information role in developing behavior in information seeking process. Seekers show typical patterns due to personality. It will be easier to understand the connection between personality and information seeking if the pattern of seeking behavior of user is recognized. It is essential for a teacher, librarian and information officer etc to be acquainted with seeking behavior of users so that they can help the users in searching”.

(McCrac and John, 1992) described five basic dimensions of personality related to behavior shown in table 3.1.
Table 3.1 Personality dimensions and the poles of traits they form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality dimension</th>
<th>High level</th>
<th>Low level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neuroticism sensitive,</td>
<td>nervous secure</td>
<td>confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extraversion outgoing</td>
<td>energetic shy,</td>
<td>withdrawn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness to experience inventive</td>
<td>curious cautious</td>
<td>conservative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreeableness friendly</td>
<td>compassionate</td>
<td>outspoken</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Neuroticism**

(Howard and Howard, 1998) “described that neuroticism is related to emotional control. The person having a tendency towards neuroticism is temperamental, worried nervous and reactive. These are easily bothered by stimuli in their environment which resistant persons need strong stimuli to be provoked”.

**Extraversion**

(Howard and Howard, 1998) “extravert tends to be physically and verbally more active whereas introverts are independent, reserved, steady and like to be alone. The person in the middle of the dimensions likes a mix between social situations and solitude”.

**Openness to Experience**

(Howard and Howard, 1995) “described that openness to experience is a measure of depth, breadth and variability in a person’s imagination and urge for experiences. This factor related to the intellect, openness to new ideas, cultural interests, educational aptitude and creativity as well as an interest in varied sensory and cognitive experiences. The preservers with low openness to experience are conventional, conservative and prefer familiarity”.

**Agreeableness**

(Howard and Howard, 1995) “The agreeableness scale is linked to altruism, nurturance, caring and emotional support versus competitiveness, hostility, indifference, self-centeredness, spitefulness and jealousy”.

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**Conscientiousness**
(Howard and Howard, 1998) “the conscientious focused person is concentrating on only a couple of goals and strives hard to perceive them. He is career-oriented. Conscientiousness has been linked to educational achievement and particularly to will to achieve.

Personality traits play an important role in learning process. Seeking process and seeking strategies reflect personality characteristics”.

### 3.3.5 Barriers in Information Seeking Behavior

Information need is a subjective experience. A need arises in the mind of a person who perceives the need but no one observes it. It is not necessary that an individual who perceives the need take action or engage in information seeking behavior to satisfy his need as some barriers resist involving in seeking behavior. These barriers belong to his personality and some other factors which are role related. The role belongs to the characteristics in which he is acting as professional or social or interpersonal elements might be involved such as the environment in which he plays his role. Sometimes the environment creates economical, political and geographical barriers.

(Wilson and Walsh, 1996) describes these types of barriers.

- Personal Barriers
- Economic Barriers
- Social/Interpersonal Barriers
- Environmental/Situational Barriers
- Information source
- Personal Barriers
- Social or role related barriers and environmental barriers
This picture illustrated the barriers a man faces in information seeking behavior. The word intervening variables is used for these barriers. These variables intervene in acquiring and using information. According to (Wilson and Walsh, 1996) these are related to personal, emotional, educational, social, demographic, economical and environmental characteristics of a seeker.

1. Personal Characteristics

   a. **Cognitive dissonance**: Cognitive dissonance means “motivation for behavior”. A person feels uncomfortable in a conflicting situation or gap in knowledge. This situation motivates him to search information. Some people are inquisitive by nature. They have a strong desire to know about the world, their environment and themselves. This desire motivates them to seek information.

   b. **Selective exposure**: (Rogers, 1983) explored that individuals show their interest in ideas and information that matches with their existing knowledge and ideas. They expose themselves in such ideas.

   c. **Physiological cognitive and emotional characteristics**: following are some physiological, cognitive and emotional characteristics which become a barrier in information seeking process?
**Physiological characteristics:** include eyesight problems, disability in walking etc

**Cognitive characteristics:** include lack of ability of perception and lack of knowledge.

**Emotional characteristics:** include the shyness and nervousness of a person to go and search information and their uneasiness in consulting the information channel or source.

d. **Educational Level and Knowledge Base:** Low level of education limits information seeking behavior. The user does not have knowledge about the information source and channels to solve his problems. His must be aware where to go to look for information and how to consult the information source.

e. **Demographic Variable:** Age has a great impact on information seeking behavior for example; youngsters show interest in specific type of information such as choice of occupation, career planning while the aged do not have interest in such topics. Gender is also an important factor in information seeking behavior for example women show seeking behavior in their topic of interest.

2. **Economic Barriers:**

Wilson describes economic barriers as “The economic issues related to information seeking behavior falls in two categories: direct economic cost, and the value of time. These may apply either to the process of information seeking itself, or to the consequent actions”.

3. **Social/Interpersonal Barriers:**

Interpersonal barriers become a hindrance when the information source is a person or access to information needs a personal contact. These types of barriers occur in interpersonal interaction.

4. **Environmental/Situational Barriers:**

According to Wilson “immediate situation of information seeking activity can include elements that represent barriers to continuing that activity, and that the wider environment can also present”. He specifies environmental and situational barriers such as time, geography and national cultures.

- **Time:** Lack of time is also a strong hurdle as professionals do not have time to search the information they need.
- **Geography:** The place where the information keeper lives is also important.
It is to be seen here that information sources and channels are available there. Libraries of the third world countries do not have enough information sources and services due to lack of funds. In these countries, even internet facility is not available in certain areas due to a number of reasons.

5. Information Source characteristics

- **Access**: some sources are accessible easily in information seeking while some are not. Many of the sources are available in other cities or countries. The acquisition of these sources is timely and costly.

- **Credibility**: Uncertainty about the credibility of source hinders in seeking behavior as the seeker hesitates to use unreliable sources.

- **Channel of communication**: Reliability of channel is important in seeking behavior as the acceptance of channel from the user has great impact on the seeker.

Summarizing the complex ideas and thoughts presented by various experts, one can say that information seeking behavior is a multi dimensional process and its dimensions are mental, linguistic, cognitive and social and psychological. The process starts when a person perceives a need in his/her mind. For satisfaction of need they interact with library, information centers, Internet or a person? Interaction causes social relationship in turn. Thinking, perception, memory and learning are involved in cognitive process. Language is used to convey the message which appears in mind. It is a learning process in which thinking, dealing and acting are involved.

Information seeking behavior undertakes under certain circumstances e.g. time, conditions and background references etc so it is considered to be a context-based process. One of its important dimensions is psychological in nature. Personality development is a psychological matter. An individual’s type of personality has a great impact on his seeking process. Some other factors like physiological, emotional, learning, and demographic etc also deeply influence information seeking behavior i.e. some people have to face some restraints. These barriers may be economic, social, environment, timing or geographical. Accessibility and reliability of an information source or channel is also quite important in this process.
Ever increasing number of sources and channels of information causes information overload. Consequently user’s demand for various types of information is increasing continuously. There is an immense need to assess and analyze the real and current information needs of users and also comprehend the phenomenon of information seeking in various seeking environment.
References

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