



# Information Seeking Behaviour of Agricultural Students in Electronic Environment: a study of constituent colleges of Tamilnadu Agricultural University

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## Abstract:

This Research paper explores the information seeking behaviour of agricultural students in tamilnadu. The study aims to understand how these students search to access evaluate and utilize agricultural information to enhance their academic and practical knowledge. It also investigates the factors that influence their information seeking behaviour and the challenges they encounters in the process. The research employed a mixed methods approach combining surveys and interviews to collect data from agricultural students in various colleges in Tamil Nadu. The findings reveals valuable insights into the preference, needs and challenges faced by agricultural students in accessing agricultural information which can inform improvements in information provision and services in the agricultural sector.

**Keywords:** Information, Information Seeking Behaviour, Agricultural Colleges,

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## Introduction:

Agriculture plays a pivotal role in the socio economic developments of India. With millions of individual engaged in farming and related activities. Agriculture education is a crucial component of this sector, providing students with the knowledge and skills needed to address the challenges facing the agricultural industry. Information seeking behaviour is an essential aspect of the learning process, enabling students to access, evaluate and utilize information to enhance their academic and practical knowledge understanding how agricultural students seek and use information is vital for improving educational program and support services in this field.

This research paper explores the information seeking behaviour of agricultural students in Tamil Nadu, one of the India's leading agricultural states. The study investigates the

sources and channels of information preferred by students. The factors influencing their choices and the challenges they encounter in the process. The findings of this study can inform strategies to enhance information provision and services in agricultural education.

## Literature Review:

While there is limited research specifically focussed on agricultural students in tamilnadu. Mathews<sup>2</sup> Eleanor surveyed the academic community during the fall quarter of 1979 to determine whether the present services facilities and resources of the IOWA state university of science and technology needs the needs of its users. The result of the survey indicated that graduate students use the electronic environment in essentially the same way, while use by undergraduate is different. Hendris etall<sup>2</sup> analysed the services, personal and facilities of the electronic



environment system in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the libraries. This study indicated that the MSU libraries are effectively meeting the needs of their users. They reported that electronic environment facilities and collections for their needs and the personnel behaviour, encompasses the systematic process through which individuals actively search for, access, evaluate and utilize information to fulfil their specific needs or goals (Wilson, 1999). In case of agricultural students, these needs often revolve around acquiring knowledge related to crop management, soil science, pest control and sustainable agricultural practices. The study covers the four that comes under tamilnadu agricultural university ie, tamilnadu agriculture college and research institute located at Madurai, Coimbatore and Killikulam, Forest College and Research institute located at mettupalayam.

#### **Overview of the Colleges**

##### ➤ **Agriculture College and Research Institute (AC & RI), Madurai**

Madurai Agricultural College was started in 1965. It is the second largest agricultural college campus in tamilnadu agricultural university. This college is offering various UG and PG Programmes in agricultural domain. The establishment of the institute is an important landmark in expanding education as well as scientific research in agriculture in southern tamilnadu.

##### ➤ **Agriculture College and Research Institute (AC & RI), Killikulam (Thoothukudi)**

The college was established in 1985 as the third constituent college of tamilnadu agriculture university. This college is offering various UG and PG Programmes in various domain of agriculture. This college is contributing towards the generation of human resources in the field of agriculture. Besides offering quality education, the college serves the farming community of southern districts of tamilnadu through dedicated research in all frontier areas of agriculture and extension activities.

##### ➤ **Agriculture College and Research Institute (AC & RI), Kumulur (Tiruchirapalli)**

Agriculture college and Research institute is the constituent college of Tamilnadu Agriculture University offering UG Programmes. This college was established as a constituent institution of the prestigious Tamilnadu Agricultural University in the year of 1972 at Coimbatore later it was shifted to kumulur in the year of 1992.

##### ➤ **Forest College and Research Institute (FC & RI), Mettupalayam.**

The Forest College and research institute is located at mettupalayam in the sylvan surroundings of jakanari forest, about 40 km north of tamilnadu Agricultural University main campus, Coimbatore. This college offering various UG and PG Programmes. It is situated over 200 ha of reserved forest, located of the foothills of Nilgiris on the Kotagiri road.

#### **Objectives of the study.**

The main objectives of the study are as follows:

- Users approaches to information sources in their areas of concern
- To evaluate the adequacy and inadequacy of the electronic environment collection and electronic environment services based on the opinion of the faculty of the various departments in the four colleges of Tamilnadu agricultural university.
- Users awareness about the existing sources and services
- Users information seeking behaviour
- The users are satisfied with the use of electronic environment , as they have been able to get more resources.

#### **Scope of the Study:**

The Scope of the study is confined to four colleges of TNAU ie, Tamilnadu Agriculture College and Research Institute located in Madurai, Killikulam, Kumulur and Mettupalayam with specific attention to students of all departments.

#### **Data Collection:**

The following research tools can be in the survey to collect data.

- A. Questionnaire
- B. Interview
- C. Observation
- D. Record relating

### Methodology

In the present research questionnaires has been used to collect the necessary data for analysis. It was decided to conduct the survey with 25 users of each of 4 colleges attached to Taminadu agricultural university and the total sample size is 100. The respondents were given pre structured questionnaire

irrespective of their status. The author personally got the questionnaires filled from respondents. Some of respondents were willing to fill up the questionnaire but some of them showed great reluctance. A lot of persuasion had to be used to get the questionnaires filled. To get insight into the goals outlined for the current study, the collected data is statistically examined.

### Data Analysis and Interpretation:

Chi-Square Test has been used for Data Analysis in this study.

**Table.1 Educational Qualification of their Parents**

Description	AC&RI, Madurai	AC&RI, Killikulam	AC&RI, Kumulur	FC&RI, Mettupalayam	Total
Below SSLC	11	6	2	8	27
SSLC	4	4	12	5	25
HSC	3	4	3	3	13
UG	1	9	3	6	19
PG	6	2	5	3	16
Others	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>X<sup>2</sup>= 22.96; df=15 ; p-value&lt;0.01</b>					

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In general the students social background has an impact on their academic career. Hence an attempt has been made to elicit the family background of the respondents. As regards to the educational background of the family of the respondents, the table.2

shows that majority of the parents of the students are having education that is less than collegiate education. Statistically it reveals that there is no association between the parents educational qualification and students academic career.

**Table.2.Respondents Income of Parents**

Description	AC&RI, Madurai	AC&RI, Killikulam	AC&RI, Kumulur	FC&RI, Mettupalayam	Total
Below 20000	9	11	18	10	48
Above 20000	16	14	07	15	52
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>X<sup>2</sup>= 7.34; df=3 ; p-value&lt;0.01</b>					

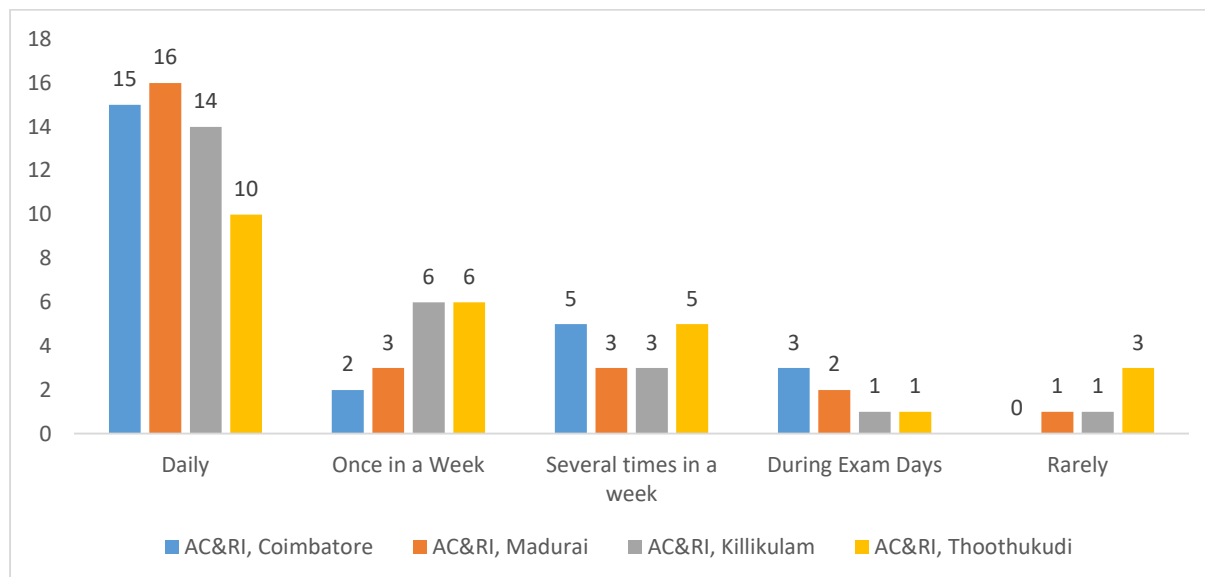
The economic status of the students reveal that the respondents are equally distributed across an average income of Rs..20000/- and Above Rs.20000/-. The result of the above table revealed that their parents income has not made any impact in their studies there is no association between the income of their parents and their pursuit of Education.

**Table 3.Respondents views about Frequency of Visiting the Electronic Environment**

Description	AC&RI, Madurai	AC&RI, Killikulam	AC&RI, Kumulur	FC&RI, Mettupalayam	Total
Daily	15	16	14	10	55



Once in a Week	02	03	06	06	<b>17</b>
Several times in a week	5	3	3	5	<b>16</b>
During Exam Days	03	02	01	01	<b>07</b>
Rarely	0	1	1	3	<b>5</b>
	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>
<b><math>\chi^2= 10.87</math>; <math>df=12</math> ; <math>p\text{-value}&lt;0.01</math></b>					



**Figure 1. Frequency of Visiting the Electronic Environment**

From the Table 3 it is clear that the students of agricultural colleges visit their electronic environment at least once in a day. Most of the students visit the electronic environment regularly. Moreover all the four colleges have the subscription of e-resources and databases of their domain and all of them were nurtured with the awareness of how to utilize the E-

Resources. This shows that the education at all the four agricultural colleges are electronic environment oriented. Statistically it reveals that there is no significant changes in accessing the electronic environment at various college students in various frequency.

**Table 4. Respondents views about Time Spent each day in Library**

Description	AC&RI, Madurai	AC&RI, Killikulam	AC&RI, Kumulur	FC&RI, Mettupalayam	Total
Less than 2 Hours	15	13	18	15	61
4 Hours	5	8	6	7	26
4-6 Hours	5	4	1	3	13
More than 6 Hours	0	0	0	0	0
	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>
<b><math>\chi^2= 4.29</math>; <math>df=9</math> ; <math>p\text{-value}&lt;0.01</math></b>					

library users spend varied time duration for browsing desired information within Libraries depending upon their information need and the purpose of eISSN1303-5150

searching information. Table 4 reveals that most of the students spend less than 2 hours every day to search their desired information followed by students who spend 4 hours. It is



also obvious that some of the students spend 4 to 6 hours and none are spending more than 6 hours in library. According to the statistical finding  $p < 0.01$ , there is no significant changes

among various college students frequency of time spent on each day for their information seeking behaviours.

**Table 5: Respondents Reason for Visiting the Library**

Description	AC&RI, Madurai	AC&RI, Killikulam	AC&RI, Kumulur	FC&RI, Mettupalayam	Total
Borrowing Books	09	12	08	06	35
Using E-Resources	05	04	05	09	23
Using the Reference Materials	09	07	10	08	34
Reading Newspaper/Magazines	02	02	02	02	08
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>

**$X^2 = 5.29$ ;  $df = 3$  ;  $p\text{-value} < 0.01$**

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User visit libraries with different purposes to satisfy their information needs. Respondents were asked to mention the purpose of visit to library. Table 5 reveals that majority of users visit the library for borrowing books. It is further highlighted that 34 percentage of students are visit the library for using the reference materials following

which 23% of Students are for use of E-Resources and only 8% of students visit to library for reading newspapers and magazines. Statistically, it revealed that there is no significant changes in visiting the library for their information seeking behaviour in between the various colleges.

**Table 6: Respondents views about Satisfaction with Library Collection**

Description	AC&RI, Madurai	AC&RI, Killikulam	AC&RI, Kumulur	FC&RI, Mettupalayam	Total
Satisfied	18	21	16	17	72
Not Satisfied	07	04	09	08	28
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>

**$X^2 = 2.78$ ;  $df = 3$  ;  $p\text{-value} < 0.01$**

Textbooks, dictionaries, periodicals, and electronic resources are just a few of the information sources that libraries have access to. The collection a library has in its possession determines its level of success. Table 6 reveals that while the remaining 28%

of users are dissatisfied with the library's current selection, 72% of users are satisfied with it. According to the result, there is no significant changes between the various college students satisfaction level with their library collections.

**Table 7: Respondents views about Utilization of Resources Format in Library**

Description	AC&RI, Madurai	AC&RI, Killikulam	AC&RI, Kumulur	FC&RI, Mettupalayam	Total
Print	15	18	20	21	74



<b>Electronic</b>	10	07	05	04	<b>26</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>X<sup>2</sup>= 4.36; df=3 ; p-value&lt;0.01</b>					

Currently, information sources are offered in a variety of formats, providing customers the option to select the most practical ones, such as print or electronic. Table 7 makes it very evident that the majority of users (74%) prefer to use both print and electronic formats to find the

information they require. But 26% of them use electronic sources to get the information they want. According to statistics, there are not significant variations between the opinions of the four college students on the use of resource formats in libraries.

**Table 8: Respondents views about Formal Sources to obtain the Information**

Description	AC&RI, Madurai	AC&RI, Killikulam	AC&RI, Kumulur	FC&RI, Mettupalayam	Total
<b>Textbooks</b>	10	08	12	14	<b>44</b>
<b>Reference Books</b>	07	06	04	03	<b>20</b>
<b>Journals/E-Journals</b>	05	04	02	03	<b>14</b>
<b>Databases</b>	02	05	05	04	<b>16</b>
<b>Newspaper</b>	01	02	02	01	<b>6</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>X<sup>2</sup>= 7.41; df=12 ; p-value&lt;0.01</b>					

Users utilize libraries to get the information they need. To meet their information demands, different users turn to various information sources. Table 8 clearly shows that the majority of users (44%), who choose to use textbooks, followed by 20% of users for reference books, 16% of users for databases, and 14% of students for

journals/e-journals. It is also discovered that just a small fraction of consumers, or 6%, use newspapers as their official sources for information. According to statistics, there is no significant changes of respondents views about formal sources to obtain the information among 4 colleges.

**Table 9: Respondents views of Search Tools to avail the Information**

Description	AC&RI, Madurai	AC&RI, Killikulam	AC&RI, Kumulur	FC&RI, Mettupalayam	Total
<b>Reference from the Book</b>	15	14	16	17	<b>62</b>
<b>Indexing Journal</b>	02	02	01	02	<b>7</b>
<b>Abstracting Journal</b>	03	02	01	01	<b>7</b>
<b>Catalogue/OPAC</b>	05	07	07	05	<b>24</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>X<sup>2</sup>= 2.98; df=9 ; p-value&lt;0.01</b>					

Libraries are an essential source for meeting people' information demands. The library catalogue (OPAC), indexing journals, abstracting journals, and other tools are

available for users to access documents. To learn more about the tools that users most frequently use to access documents, data was gathered and presented in table 9. The table



clearly shows that the majority of users—62%—use book references to locate the requested documents, followed by 24% and 7% of users who utilize library catalogs and indexing and abstracting journals,

respectively. After the calculation, it found that there is no significant changes in respondent's views of search tools to avail the information among other college students.

**Table 10: Respondents Views of Preferred Place for Accessing Information**

Description	AC&RI, Madurai	AC&RI, Killikulam	AC&RI, Kumulur	FC&RI, Mettupalayam	Total
Library	12	14	11	10	47
Department	03	02	05	04	14
Internet	08	06	09	07	30
Hostel	02	03	0	04	9
	25	25	25	25	100

$X^2= 6.72$ ;  $df=9$  ;  $p\text{-value}<0.01$

students want to access the needed information from a variety of locations according to their convenience. They have access to information via the internet, libraries, and even their hostels. Table 10 shows that users are using various locations to access the information they require. The majority of users, 47%, prefer to get their

required information at the central library, while 30% prefer to access it on the internet. Only 14% of users access information at the Department, while only 9% of users access information at the hostel. Statistically, it found that there is no significant change between the 4 college students views of preferred place for accessing the information.

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**Table 11: Respondents Views on Problems encounter while using Electronic Resources**

Description	AC&RI, Madurai	AC&RI, Killikulam	AC&RI, Kumulur	FC&RI, Mettupalayam	Total
Power Outage	03	05	06	04	18
Poor Network	07	06	10	12	35
Limited Access	02	04	08	09	23
Others	13	10	01	0	24
	25	25	25	25	100

$X^2= 30.4$ ;  $df=9$  ;  $p\text{-value}<0.01$

Although electronic resources have many features that help users meet their information demands, users nevertheless encounter a variety of issues when using the information they provide. Table 11 makes it clear that the majority of users—35%—experience bad network performance when accessing electronic resources, and 24% of users have chosen an others option, followed by 23% of users who have chosen the limited access to the resources. However, 18% of students think that a power outage prevents them from using the library's electronic resources. According to the statistics, we

found that there is no significant change among various college students' views on problem encounter while using the electronic resources.

### Conclusion

According to this study, the majority of students regularly use the college library for their information needs. As a result, they gained knowledge on how to use the library's resources for their studies and other research projects. The majority of students in all four colleges spend their time in the library reading books and other reference materials





and taking notes. Through this survey, we discovered that the majority of students are happy with the resources in their library; however, some of them are not, and this problem will be resolved in due time by obtaining additional resources. Users still believe that printed versions of papers may satisfy their information demands, as evidenced by the fact that the majority of users still use printed resources, albeit some also use electronic ones. The study found that the majority of students utilize textbooks and reference books as official sources of information since studying for examinations and taking notes are the main reasons they seek information. The majority of pupils favour using the central library to get the needed information. The study's final section looked at issues users had while trying to find the information they wanted, and the majority of them identified poor network, a lack of resources, and power outages as the primary issues.

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