

Impact of Information Literacy on Qualitative Legal Practice Among Lawyers in Rajasthan

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The study evaluates information literacy (IL) and examines its significance in the legal field, concentrating on Rajasthani attorneys. For legal practitioners to efficiently navigate the vast array of legal resources, such as case law, statutes, and digital databases, they must possess information literacy, which is the capacity to recognize, locate, assess, and use information. In addition to examining the difficulties advocates encounter in handling legal material, the study seeks to determine the present levels of IL among advocates and the ways in which IL affects legal research, case preparation, and client representation. Through standardized questionnaires, 500 legal professionals—including advocates, judges and legal practioners were surveyed to gather data. The main conclusions show that although while the majority of legal professionals are somewhat confident in their IL abilities, there are still a lot of gaps in their ability to navigate legal databases and determine the reliability of legal material. The study highlights the value of ongoing professional development, especially in digital literacy and legal research methodologies, as this will guarantee that attorneys can effectively handle information overload and enhance the caliber of their work. In order to improve the general competency of legal practitioners, the study ends by recommending increased integration of IL training in both legal education and professional settings.

Keywords: Information literacy (IL), Legal Research, Digital Legal Resources, Legal Practice, Legal Databases.

1. Introduction

The ability to recognize, locate, assess, and use information as a tool for problem-solving and decision-making is known as information literacy. This ability is essential to the legal

profession since practitioners must navigate a wide range of legal information sources, including statutes, case laws, regulations, and scholarly writings. The ability to filter and assess reliable information is essential for legal practitioners in the modern era, as most legal resources are digital. Additionally, this skill aids in their case preparation, persuasive argumentation, and legal research. A lawyer that is information literate is more effective because they are able to stay current on legal developments and offer strong legal reasoning. Professionals can accurately obtain pertinent data and navigate through information overload with its assistance. This always leads to better client outcomes and higher-quality legal services.

Compared to other scientific disciplines, information literacy in the legal sector is founded on a lot of distinct, even unique, factors. Legal students and practitioners face new challenges in understanding and interpreting the law as a result of the ongoing emergence of new legal professions. Proficiency in locating and utilizing national and international legal documents found in pertinent databases is essential. As a result, it is especially important for law students to develop their contextual and specific information literacy skills in addition to their generic information literacy skills. These skills are essential for the development of their lifelong competencies, which are required not only for their academic education but also for their future as lawyers.

The study investigates the information literacy of Rajasthani legal practitioners, focusing on their ability to access, evaluate, and use complex legal information. It highlights the need for skill development to keep up with the evolving legal landscape, where digital resources and information overload are common challenges.

• INFORMATION LITERACY

Information literacy is a more general phrase that encompasses ICT, library usage, and information management abilities that allow students to engage in the information field. Information literacy is the process of knowing when and why information is required, where to find it and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in ethical way. It is the combination of all skills that are required for the effective and maximum use of information.

Paul Zurkowski (1974) First defined Information literacy, “People trained in the application of information resource to their work can be called information literates”.

ALA (1989), “To be information literate, a person must be able to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate and use effectively the needed information”.

CILIP The Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professionals described information literacy as “knowing when and why you need information, where to find it, and how to assess, use, and communicate it in an ethical manner” in the United Kingdom (UK) (Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professionals.

SCONUL (1999) The Standing Conference of National and University Libraries formulate a framework for the seven pillars of information literacy in 1999 (Bent & Stubbings, 2011). Information literacy comprises seven main attributes: Identify his information need, Assess the exiting information and identify loopholes, Postulates searching strategies for locating information, locate and access information needed, assess the research process and analyze

information, arrange information in a professional and best way and acquired knowledge utilize for professional goals.

- Objectives

- [1] To assess the current information literacy level among advocates in the state of Rajasthan.
- [2] To ascertain whether the lawyers find and use the necessary information sources.
- [3] How are the advocates in Rajasthan effectively able to access, evaluate, and utilize legal information in their practice?

2. Literature Review

A review of the research indicates that information literacy encompasses not only information skills but also the integration of different literacy skills, personal and interpersonal skills, and higher order thinking skills. The ethical and legal issues are closely related to the social and economic issues.

➤ Suvarna Veerbhadra (2024) The study examines information literacy (IL) in the legal profession, focusing on Karnataka legal practitioners. It found that while most are confident in IL skills, there are gaps in managing legal information and assessing its credibility. The study also revealed gender differences, with female practitioners facing more challenges in interpretation of legal information. The research suggests continuous professional training in digital literacy and legal research techniques to manage information overload and improve practice quality.

➤ Binsfeld, A. (2019) The aim of this qualitative study is to explore new barristers' information literacy (IL) experiences during their transition from education to the workplace. New barristers are defined as individuals currently doing pupillage or who qualified as professionals in the last two years. Although the transition into work constitutes an important period in new barristers' legal careers during which they face many IL challenges, so far neither new barristers' perspectives on their IL experiences nor their transition experiences have been examined in detail. The study employed semi-structured interviews to explore the IL experiences of six new barristers. This thesis finds that new barristers face a variety of IL challenges and thus have different transition experiences. For them, legal research has emotional implications. As professionals, they have IL needs and experiences that are dissimilar from the ones they developed during their education. This impacts on the content and delivery of IL training for new barristers. The study broadens our understanding of legal IL and new legal professionals' IL needs. It has implications for law librarians and legal educators as it throws the complexity of new barristers' workplace IL into relief. Finally, the study offers some recommendations for IL training.

➤ Kim-Prieto & Kahvecioglu (2015) Information Literacy (IL) has been defined by the ACRL as the ability to identify, access, evaluate, and apply information in an ethical manner. However, IL skills are not an ossified set of behaviors, and IL skills cannot evolve in an intellectual vacuum, without the content that allows for such skills to emerge from practice. As such, IL should be contextualized within the structures and modes of thought of particular

disciplines. In response, a burgeoning IL in law movement has arisen, applying the standards of identification, accessing, evaluation, application, and ethical analyses to legal information and the research methods and tools unique to the practice of law. This article traces the development of this movement in three distinct jurisdictions: the United States, the United Kingdom, and Turkey.

➤ Lawal et al., (2013) This chapter examines the efforts undertaken to restructure the legal education system in South Africa and Nigeria. It investigates the connection between contextual influences and professional development, particularly with respect to the concept of legal information literacy and the value of acquired educational skills in the context of legal practice. The chapter provides insights to the needs and challenges for graduate requirement for legal information literacy skills in the effort to ensure productivity in the legal education system in Africa. Data were obtained using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Outcomes from the study were supportive of the importance of information literacy as central to the development of professional competence. Findings also point to a need for greater collaboration between the legal education system and the legal profession in narrowing the gap between the teaching and practice of law specifically in the design and implementation of an information literacy framework for the legal education system.

➤ Kauffman B.(2010) Improving information literacy in law translates into developing methods for improving legal research competencies among lawyers, law students and the general public. This paper summarizes four approaches for improving legal research skills of prospective lawyers in U.S. law schools and discusses their successes and shortcomings to help assess their potential application in an international environment. These approaches include: (1) offering mandatory law school courses in legal research; (2) adding elective (or optional) credit based courses in legal research; (3) offering non-credit legal research support to law students at their point of need; and (4) testing prospective lawyers on their legal research competencies as a requirement to being licensed to practice law.

3. Research methodology

This study used a survey-based research methodology to determine the level of information literacy among legal practitioners. A structured questionnaire was used as the main instrument for gathering data from a sample of 500 Rajasthan legal professionals, 365 of whom were men and 135 of whom were women. A wide variety of legal professionals at various stages of their careers were represented among the participants, which included 320 legal practitioners and 180 advocates in Rajasthan. The purpose of the questionnaire was to assess important facets of information literacy, including the capacity to locate, retrieve, assess, and apply legal knowledge efficiently. This approach made sure that the participants' information literacy abilities were thoroughly examined. To increase response rates and guarantee a solid dataset for additional research, the survey was disseminated and gathered both online and in person. To conduct this quantitative study, the simple random sample approach is used. An adapted questionnaire is distributed among 500 lawyers of Rajasthan through personal visits and electronic means.

- Analysis of the data and discussion

1 How often you utilize legal databases

Given how quickly the legal world is changing, a lawyer's skill set must include the ability to effectively access and use legal databases and e-resources. Given the growing dependence on digital resources for legal research, it is imperative to evaluate the frequency with which legal practitioners utilize these resources. In order to ascertain the degree to which male and female lawyers incorporate legal databases like Manupatra and SCC Online into their everyday work, this question was put to the survey respondents. This knowledge is essential for spotting possible information literacy gaps, determining whether additional training is required, and determining whether legal professionals are making the most of these resources to improve the efficiency and accuracy of their research. Table 1 displays the empirical data that was gathered.

How often you utilize legal databases (e.g.,
Manupatra, SCC Online) and e-resources

Gender	Frequency				Total
	Daily	Several Times a week	Occasionally	Rarely	
Male	30	80	190	20	320
	9%	25%	59%	7%	100%
Female	20	80	70	10	180
	11%	44%	39%	6%	100%
Total	50	160	260	30	500
	10%	32%	52%	6%	100%

Compared to men (25%), a larger percentage of female practitioners (44%) consult legal databases multiple times per week. It appears that men are more likely to utilize legal databases less regularly than women, as the vast majority of male attorneys use them only infrequently, while only 39% of female attorneys rely on them occasionally. While all females report using databases at least occasionally, only 7% of males admit using them infrequently. Compared to their male counterparts, female attorneys use legal databases more frequently. When compared to most men (59%) who use databases only rarely, a sizable percentage of women (44%) utilize databases frequently. The significant proportion of men who use legal databases only infrequently points to a possible need, access, or skill gap that may be filled with resources or specialized training. The findings suggest that compared to men, female attorneys might be depending more on online legal materials. This could indicate that they have a better grasp of the importance of these resources in their profession or are more digitally literate.

2 The ability to use digital information resources with confidence

To understand the fundamental skills of legal practitioners in the current legal environment, it is vital to ask participants how confident they are in their ability to recognize and obtain pertinent legal information utilizing both traditional and digital resources. Legal practitioners' expectations are rising. For an efficient and successful legal practice, they must be able to quickly find and assess the huge volumes of material available from a variety of sources, such

as statutes, case law, and legal databases like Manupatra and SCC Online. Table 2 displays the answers to this question that were submitted.

Table2. Self-assurance in locating and obtaining pertinent legal information through both conventional and digital information resources

Gender	Confidence levels				Total
	Very confident	Confident	Somewhat confident	Not confident	
Male	34	50	195	42	320
	10%	16%	61%	13%	100%
Female	28	42	85	25	180
	16%	23%	47%	14%	100%
Total	61	92	280	67	500
	12%	19%	56%	13%	100%

The majority of legal practitioners, 56%, are somewhat confident in their ability to locate and obtain legal information. However, women are more confident (23%), and 14% of them report lack of confidence. Only 10% of men and 16% of women express high confidence, indicating a skills gap that requires training and professional growth. This highlights the need for more robust training programs and educational efforts to foster competence and confidence in legal resource use.

3 Aspects of legal studies that are challenging

In order to better understand the particular areas that present challenges for legal practitioners, the respondents were asked a question designed to identify the most difficult aspects of legal research. For experts in the legal industry, the ability to create efficient search queries is a prerequisite for conducting legal research. To develop an accurate and productive legal practice, one must search databases, locate pertinent case law, and evaluate legal facts. Table 3 contains a tabulation of the responses.

Table 3. The most challenging facets of legal research

An aspect of legal research	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Creating efficient search terms	45	25	70
	14%	13%	14%
Using legal databases (such as SCC Online and Manupatra)	95	50	145
	30%	28%	29%
Locating pertinent statutes and case law	160	95	255
	50%	53%	51%
Evaluating and analyzing the data that was obtained	20	10	30
	6%	6%	6%
I don't think legal research is difficult.	0	0	0

	0%	0%	0%
	320	180	500
	100%	100%	100%

Legal professionals face challenges in identifying relevant statutes and case laws, with over half struggling to find them. 29% find it difficult to navigate legal databases, indicating a need for better search tools and training. Both genders also struggle with analyzing and understanding retrieved information. To improve practitioners' effectiveness, law firms should focus on providing comprehensive training on research methodologies, database navigation, and information interpretation.

4 Levels of difficulty in utilizing digital tools

The purpose of the inquiry was to learn more about the degree of difficulties that attorneys face when utilizing digital legal research tools and databases. By determining how long legal professionals have trouble using digital technologies, organizations, and companies can assess how much training is needed to increase their proficiency. and ease when working with these vital resources. Inquiring about the survey's problem frequency aids in evaluating how well attorneys have embraced and incorporated these digital tools into their regular work, which is essential in a legal environment that prioritizes digitalization. A sizable percentage of respondents reported regularly or sometimes having trouble using legal research tools, which may indicate gaps in their use or access to more sophisticated research methods.

Table 4. Difficulty level while using digital legal research tools and databases

Difficulty level	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Frequently,I have trouble using most tools.	11	6	17
	3%	3%	3%
Occasionally,I have difficulties.	195	106	301
	61%	59%	60%
Rarely,Most of the time, I feel at ease utilizing them	66	43	109
	21%	24%	22%
Never,With every instrument, I feel completely at ease.	48	25	73
	15%	14%	15%
I don't use online resources for legal research.	0	0	0
	0%	0%	0%
Total	320	180	500
	100%	100%	100%

Digital legal research tools are a crucial component of legal research, with 59% of women and 61% of men experiencing occasional difficulties. Despite being knowledgeable about these tools, both men and women face occasional issues. Some female respondents may have improved their skills or feel more at ease using them. Despite 0% of respondents not using

them, digital tools are a necessary component of legal research, highlighting the growing need for strong digital literacy skills in the legal industry.

5 Areas where legal research skills training is required

Given that legal research is an essential part of good legal practice, a question was posed to find out where attorneys need additional instruction or direction in developing their legal research abilities. Knowledge of the unique difficulties professionals encounter, such as researching legal databases, Legal institutions and educators will benefit from analyzing data or creating search queries, which they can subsequently use to modify their training curricula. The findings also aid in identifying possible skill shortages that could impair the effectiveness and accuracy of research, guaranteeing that training materials are allocated to the most critical areas. In the long run, this will raise the general proficiency of attorneys. Table 5 contains the tabulation of the received responses.

Table 5. Areas where additional instruction or direction in legal research techniques is needed.

Areas when instruction is necessary	Gender		Total
	Female	Male	
Sophisticated query construction and search strategies	12	9	21
	4%	5%	4%
Effectively navigating and using legal databases	194	104	298
	61%	58%	60%
Assessing the reliability and applicability of legal information	75	45	120
	23%	25%	24%
Recognizing and utilizing legal precedents	39	32	61
	12%	12%	12%
Total	320	180	500
	100%	100%	100%

Legal professionals are confident in creating efficient research queries, but 58% of females and 61% of males need assistance accessing and using legal databases. 60% of respondents find this difficult, while 23% of men and 25% of women need help assessing legal material's reliability and applicability. Only 12% of practitioners require training in legal precedents, indicating a significant issue for both sexes

4. Conclusion

The survey data reveals challenges in legal practitioners' research skills, highlighting the need for targeted interventions. Digital literacy is crucial for efficiency, with difficulties in browsing legal databases and assessing legal knowledge reliability. Training methods are needed to improve legal research efficiency.

- Implications of Enhanced Information Literacy for Legal Practice in Practice

Better client outcomes, more effective research, and more efficient case management are all results of increased information literacy, which also greatly increases the efficiency and effectiveness of legal practice. Strong information literacy enables legal professionals to find, assess, and use pertinent legal information to deliver prompt, precise, and knowledgeable advice. Additionally, this decreases the amount of time spent looking for information and improves the accuracy of the data, which leads to a more prepared legal team and faster case preparation. Additionally, improved information literacy guarantees greater team coordination, tracks case progress, and streamlines workflows, all of which benefit clients and legal professionals.

- Law schools' and bar associations' contributions to the advancement of information literacy

Future and present legal professionals' information literacy is greatly improved by law schools and bar associations. They give them thorough instruction in information management, digital tools, and legal research, giving them the tools they need to handle changing legal developments. Specialized courses on digital databases, credibility assessment, and legal research procedures are available in law schools. To assist present legal practitioners in adjusting to new technologies and practices, bar associations provide webinars, workshops, continuing legal education programs, and certification courses.

- Information Literacy Training Implementation Challenges in the Legal Profession

Time restraints, budgetary restrictions, opposition to change, educational standards, and the fast-paced nature of legal practice are some of the obstacles to integrating information literacy training into the legal profession. Financial limitations may prevent the adoption of thorough training programs, and legal practitioners may find it difficult to find the time for extra training. Adoption of new technology may be resisted by seasoned professionals, necessitating cultural changes and proof of their advantages. Smaller or underfunded law firms may have technological gaps that separate those who can improve their information literacy from those who are left behind. The implementation of universal training programs may also be hampered by inconsistent educational levels and a lack of knowledge among legal practitioners. Law schools, bar associations, and other institutions must work together to prioritize information literacy, offer easily available training programs, and show the real advantages of better research and information management abilities in order to overcome these obstacles.

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