



Research Article

## College Students' Knowledge and Utilisation of Open Access Resources: An Investigation

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### Abstract

This paper aims to explore undergraduate students' awareness and practice of open access resources across various colleges, along with related issues under the University of Calcutta. The study employed a questionnaire-based survey method, distributing 180 questionnaires, of which 152 students completed and returned the questionnaire. Results indicate that 72 (47.36%) students frequently utilised e-books or e-journals, while 58 (38.15%) obtained their usage skills to open access e-resources through teachers or research guides. Additionally, 98 (64.47%) respondents expressed satisfaction with open-access e-content. The research work findings reveal that most students are knowledgeable about open-access e-resources.

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**KEYWORDS:** Open Educational Resources, Undergraduate Student, Calcutta University, Usage of OER.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The extensive availability and effective dissemination of information resources have been simplified by advancements in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) (Baro, 2011). It has become challenging to search for proper information without wasting time in the quickly spreading information in this time (Thanuskodi, 2014). The Internet has become an information pathway, encompassing a world range of resources such as books, journals, magazines, theses, dissertations, records, and manuscripts (Zazzau, 2007). The emergence of information technology and e-publishing has made access to information on different levels, like national, international or local, easier by overcoming traditional barriers of time and space (Walmiki and Ramakrishnegowda, 2009). E-content is a system where information is stored digitally and made searchable through different digital systems and computer networks. The main purpose of open access is the electronic availability of scholarly literature to users without any cost or technical barriers. Developments in ICTs have been identified as one of the key factors driving the rise of open access. This study aims to examine how undergraduate students across various colleges at Calcutta University utilise open-access electronic information resources.

E-resources are digital versions of information that can be accessed through computer networks and electronic systems from any location at any time, without geographical or temporal constraints. These resources come in various formats, including e-books, CD-ROMs, e-journals, online databases, digital libraries and magazines, e-learning tools, internet resources, and scholarly web content. (Sudhier and Seethalekshmi, 2011)

IFLA (2012) describes e-resources as "materials that require computer access, whether through a personal computer, mainframe, or handheld mobile device. They may be accessed remotely via the internet or locally". Common types of electronic resources are full-text (aggregated) databases, e-journals, e-books, indexing and reference databases, abstracting databases, electronic audio/visual resources and numeric and statistical databases, images.

Reitz characterises e-resources as "material comprising data and/or computer program(s) encoded for reading and manipulation by a computer, either through a directly connected peripheral device like a CD-ROM drive or remotely via a network such as the Internet." She includes in this category software applications, institutional repositories like DSpace, e-texts, bibliographic databases, websites, e-journals, e-books, etc. (Reitz, 2004)

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Jogan (2015) in his research titled "Post Graduate Students at Gulbarga University: Access, Awareness, and Use of Electronic Resources." This study examines postgraduate students' opinions about the compatibility, awareness, and use of e-resources to emphasise their research, as well as their satisfaction with the services and sources that are currently offered. According to the research's findings, 90.1% students recognised the value of libraries in supporting research, and 72.5% students are satisfied with the role. Libraries now play a role in this regard.

Use of Electronic Resources by Post Graduate Students and Research Scholars of the Banaras Hindu University: A Study was the subject of research carried out by Sharad Kumar (2014). According to the report, most users (37.47%) regularly utilised e-resources for both research and teaching. The research indicates that 93.84% of individuals are cognizant of electronic resources, with the majority gaining awareness through the internet. Additionally, the findings show that 57.14% of students allocate less than an hour to use these electronic resources.

Oghenetega (2013) investigated the utilisation and awareness of electronic resources among professors at two chosen Nigerian universities. The community of this study comprised faculty members from the Western Delta University, Oghara and the Federal University, Otuoke. The results show that 70 (47%) of the participants primarily utilised e-contents for research purposes. where 91 (61%) of the students expressed high satisfaction with the level of e-resource usage at their respective institutions.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

This study utilised a survey-based method through a questionnaire to accomplish the previously stated objectives. A well-structured questionnaire is used to gather data from undergraduate respondents across different colleges affiliated with Calcutta University. 180 questionnaires were distributed, and out of them, 152 students returned, duly completed. The collected data were then classified, analysed, and tabulated using statistical methods. The study focused on undergraduate students from different colleges under Calcutta University, but it was limited to students from the university's main campus.

## 4. OBJECTIVES

- ❖ Explore the awareness and usage of open-access e-resources from undergraduate students of Calcutta University.
- ❖ Determine the purposes for which undergraduate students utilise open-access e-resources.
- ❖ Examine the frequency with which these students access online resources.
- ❖ Identify the challenges faced by users when accessing open-access e-resources.
- ❖ Provide recommendations for improvements based on the findings of the study.

## 5. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Gender wise distribution of respondents

Gender	No. of Respondents	Per cent	Percentage
Male	72		47.37%
Female	80		52.63%
<b>Total</b>	<b>152</b>		<b>100%</b>

From Table 1, the gender distribution of the respondents is as follows: 72 males, accounting for 47.37% of the total, and 80 females, representing 52.63%. This brings the total number of respondents to 152, making up 100%.

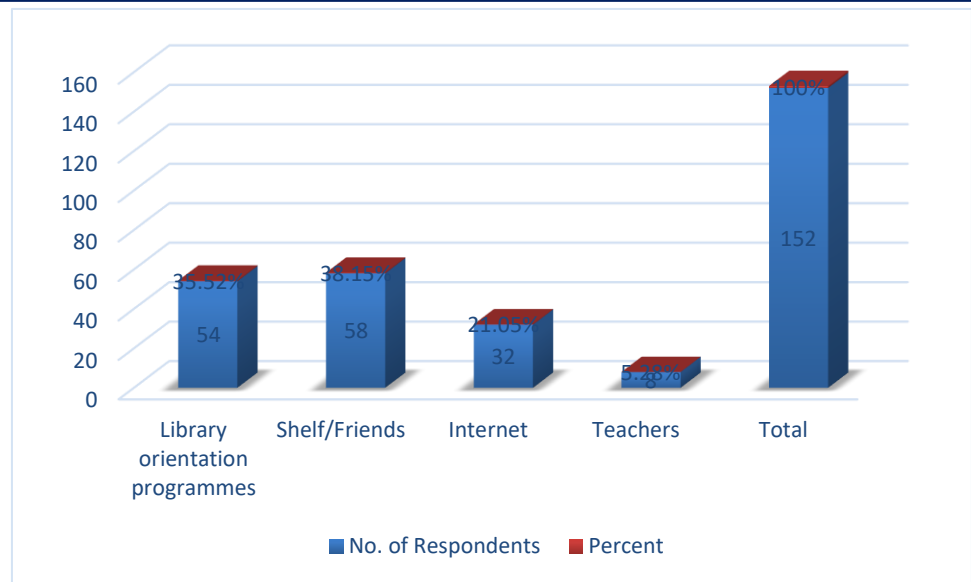


Figure 1: Awareness of Open Access E-Resource Usage Skills

Figure -2: The data reveals the sources through which students become aware of library resources. A significant proportion, 38.15%, indicated that they rely on friends or shelf exploration to navigate the library. Library orientation programs accounted for 35.52% of the responses, suggesting that these programs play an important but not dominant role in fostering awareness. The internet was the source for 21.05% of respondents,

reflecting its growing influence as a tool for information discovery. Only a small percentage, 5.28%, reported teachers as their primary source of library awareness. Overall, the data indicate that informal methods, such as friends or self-discovery, are slightly more influential than formal orientation programs in helping students become familiar with library resources.

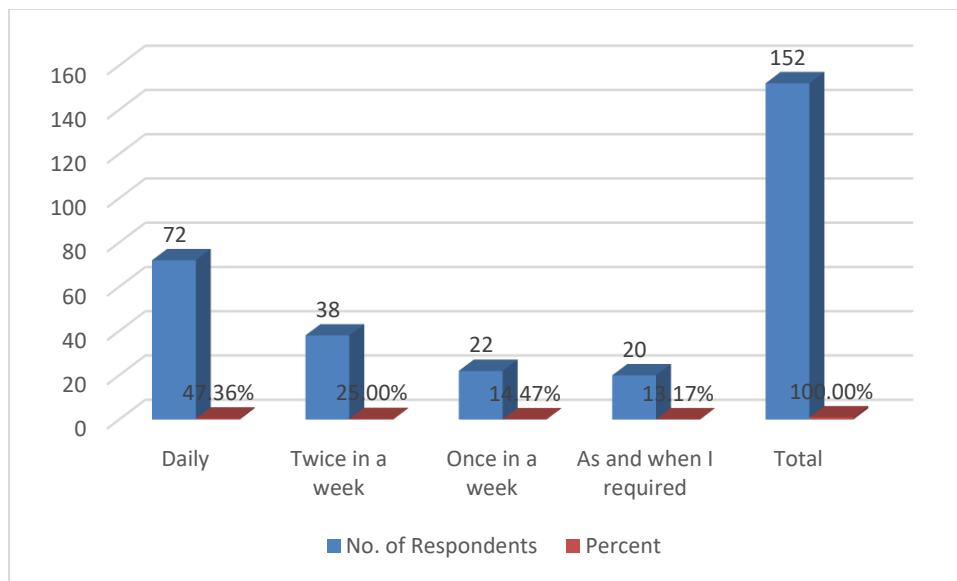


Figure 2: Frequency of Using Open Access E-Resources

Figure 2 presents the frequency of respondents' engagement with a particular activity, likely derived from a survey. Out of 152 total respondents, the largest group (72 respondents, 47.36%) indicated that they engaged in the activity daily. The second largest group, consisting of 38 respondents (25.00%), participated twice a week. Meanwhile, 22 respondents (14.47%)

engaged once a week, and the remaining 20 respondents (13.17%) reported that they participated only as needed. The data shows a clear preference for daily engagement, with decreasing participation as the frequency lowers. Overall, the survey captures a full response from all 152 participants.

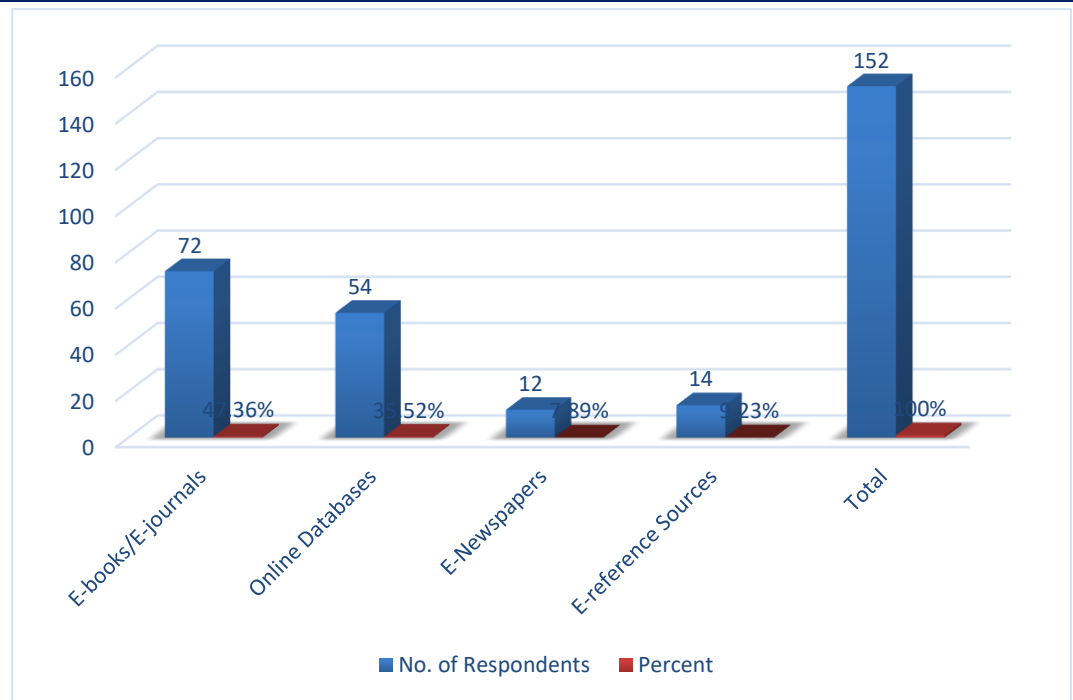


Figure 3: Types of E-Resources frequently used

Figure 3 among respondents regarding e-resource usage, with e-books and e-journals being the most favoured, attracting 47.36% of the responses. This indicates a strong inclination towards these formats for accessing information and literature. Online databases also hold significant appeal, utilised by 35.52% of respondents, suggesting their value in research

contexts. In contrast, e-newspapers and e-reference sources lag, with only 7.89% and 9.23% of respondents, respectively. Overall, the findings suggest that while e-books and online databases are central to users' information-seeking behaviours, there may be opportunities to improve the visibility and attractiveness of e-newspapers and e-reference sources.

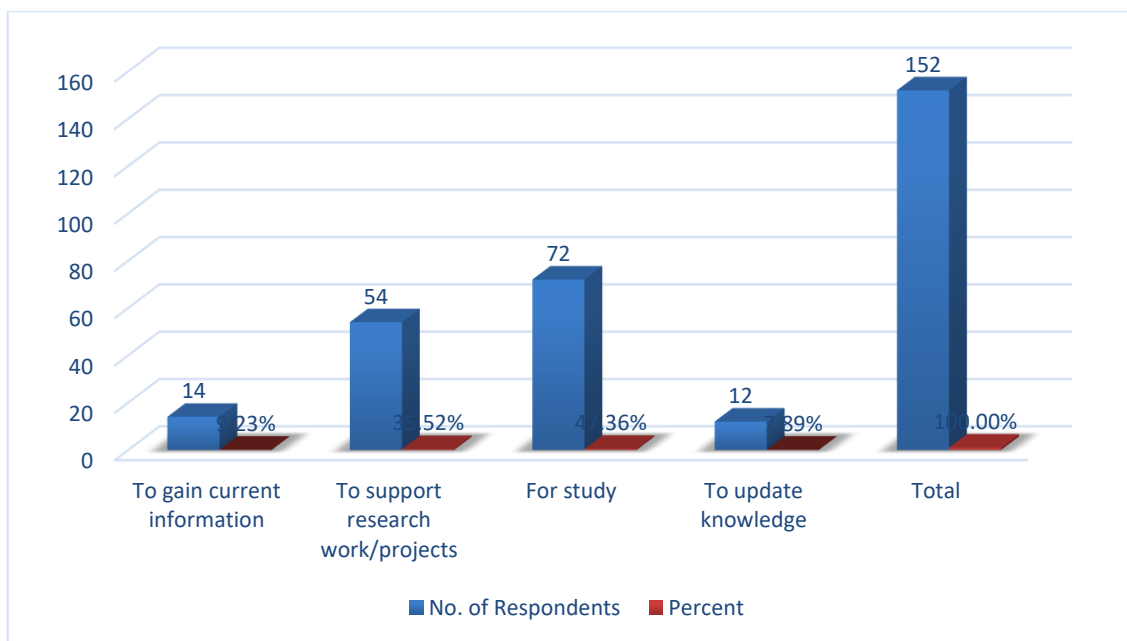


Figure 4: The Purpose of Using Open Access E-Resources

Figure 4. The data reveal that the primary purpose of the respondents' engagement is for study, accounting for 47.36% of the total 152 participants. Supporting research work or projects follows closely, with 35.52% of respondents indicating this as their reason. In contrast, seeking current information and

updating knowledge are less common motivations, representing 9.23% and 7.89%, respectively. This suggests that most respondents are focused on educational and research-related objectives, highlighting a strong inclination toward learning and academic advancement within the group.

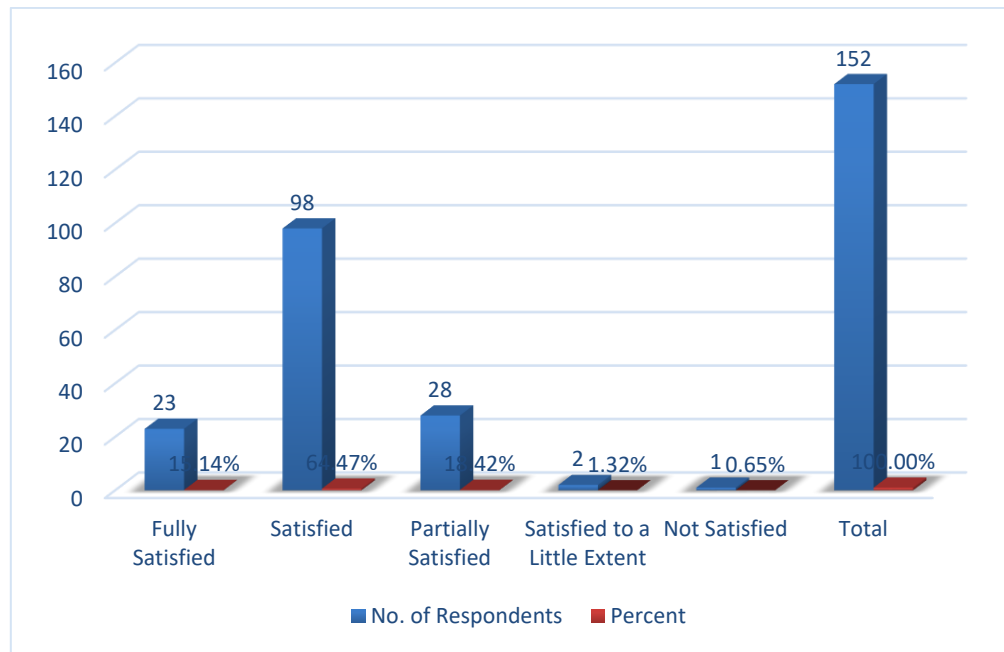


Figure 5: Level of satisfaction with Open Access E-Resources

Figure 5: The data on satisfaction levels indicates that a significant majority of respondents, 64.47%, are satisfied with their experience, while 15.14% report being fully satisfied. Together, these groups account for nearly 80% of the total respondents, suggesting a generally positive perception. However, 18.42% of participants feel only partially satisfied, indicating room for improvement. A small fraction, comprising 1.32% and 0.65%, report being satisfied to a little extent or not satisfied at all. Overall, while the satisfaction levels are predominantly positive, the notable percentage of partially satisfied respondents highlights potential areas for enhancement.

6. FINDINGS

- a. Out of the 152 responders, 80 (52.63%) were women, and 72 (47.37%) were men.
- b. Only 19(10.56%) of the respondents learned how to use open access e-resources from outside sources, whereas 58(38.15%) of the respondents learned this competence via teachers or research supervisors.
- c. The study revealed that whereas 64 respondents (42.10%) said they accessed e-resources in their department, 32 respondents (21.06%) said they accessed e-resources in the residential dormitory.
- d. Around 47.36% of the participants utilise open-access electronic resources daily, with another 25.07% using them twice a week and 24.47% using them weekly. Most respondents—72, or 47.36 per cent—frequently

utilised e-books and e-journals, followed by online databases—54, or 35.52 per cent—and e-reference sources, 14 (or 9.23 per cent).

- e. Most of the people who answered (72, or 47.36%) used e-books and e-journals, then 54, or 35.52 %, used online libraries, and finally 14 (9.23 %) used e-reference sources.
- f. When addressing the challenges faced by respondents in accessing Open Access e-resources, it was found that the most significant issue is slow internet access, reported by 61 respondents (40.13%). Additionally, 32 respondents (21.07%) indicated difficulty in finding relevant information, while 22 respondents (14.47%) cited a lack of computer skills as a barrier.

7. CONCLUSION

The rapid growth of information and communication technology has emerged as a crucial medium for the storage and retrieval of information. E-resources are becoming essential for contemporary teaching, learning, and research. The study reveals that most students are aware of open-access e-resources. Based on these findings, several recommendations are made: the university library should improve internet connection speeds to facilitate quick access to large data sets. Additionally, the library should organise user awareness programs and training sessions to educate students on effectively utilising open access e-resources to achieve their educational objectives. Given the importance of these resources, it is essential for teachers and staff to support students in accessing electronic

information and to promote greater awareness of open-access e-resources.

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