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**Academic and Professional Needs of
Professors belonging to disadvantaged**

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Academic and Professional Needs of Professors belonging to disadvantaged

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Abstract

The research was undertaken to identify various academic and professional information needs of SC/ ST Professors and to categories different information sources that were used by these professors to satisfy these needs.

About 200 professors belonging to SC/ ST communities were surveyed using questionnaire tool. Interviews and observations were also helpful to understand information needs of professors of this disadvantage group. The study was conducted with two cities namely Mumbai and Pune.

The study is concentrated on the three aspects of the academic and professional needs of the SC/ ST Professors namely 1) Teaching and Related Activities 2) Research and Publications and 3) Career Advancement. To satisfy these needs different formal and informal information sources were used by the professors.

The study illustrated the use of each source of information. The Data collected was summarized in the form of scores. The scores indicated that research was one area of high level of information requirement. The second area was application of ICT. It was followed by the information need about rules and regulation and soft skills. These areas require immediate attention of the SC/ ST Professors.

Keywords: Academic Needs, Professional Needs, Professors, Information Sources, Information Needs, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes.

Introduction

Information Need

When a person wants something because it is essential is called “Need”. (Soanes, 2007). Information need is defined as a state or process started when one perceives that there is a gap between the information and knowledge available to solve a problem and the actual solution of the problem.

Devadason & Lingam (1996) has quoted Crawford’s information needs which depends on Work activity, Discipline, Availability of facilities, Hierarchical position of individual, Motivational factors for information needs, Need to take a decision, Need to seek new ideas, Need to validate the correct ones, Need to make professional contributions. Need to establish priority for discovery etc.

Information need can be identified on three dimensions: cognitive (knowledge); affective (attitudes); and situational (abilities) (Miranda & Tarapanoff, 2008).

The Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST)

Since ancient time large population of India suffered due to the caste system. Lower caste people were denied in many aspects including right of education. The Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) are the weakest sections in the Indian society. They suffer from multiple and severe discrimination by upper caste people (Mendelsohn & Vicziany, 2000). The main distinguishing characteristics of them are their low literacy and educational attainments, economic backwardness, rural orientation and social retardation (low status, disabilities related to knowledge, skills, opportunities, etc.). The problem of their low status and economic and educational backwardness is deeply rooted in the historical processes (Ramotra, 2008).

The Scheduled Castes (SCs) and the Scheduled Tribes (STs) are two groupings of historically disadvantaged people that are given express recognition in the Constitution of India. Article 341 and 342 of the Constitution of India define as to who would be Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes with respect to any State or Union Territory (India. Ministry of Law and Justice, 2007). Government and other organizations have issued various schemes and policies to empower these communities. Subsequently the literacy level of these disadvantaged has risen a bit today; however their social, cultural, economical and educational environment is still weak. It has impacted professors belonging to SCs/ STs on personal and professional level and many are behind in their professional career.

Teachers Professional Development

Teachers Professional Development is the instruction provided to teachers to promote their development in a certain area (e.g., technology, reading instruction, subject mastery, etc.). It may be formal or informal

The research was undertaken to identify various academic and professional information needs of SC/ ST Professors and to categories different information

sources that were used by these professors to satisfy these needs. The study also revealed that libraries need to consider the situation as the opportunities to cater information needs of these professors.

Objectives

The objectives of the study were

1. To identify various academic and professional information needs of SC/ST Professors
2. To categories different information sources that were used by these Professors to satisfy these needs.

Sample

The universities were worried about the misuse of the data regarding SCs/STs and thus they were hesitant to reveal the data regarding the number of SC/ST Professors working in their institutes, subsequently, the researcher used RTI 2005 to obtain the same.

Sample of SC/ST teachers' population was drawn from colleges, departments and institutes affiliated to universities excluding deemed universities and special subject universities. Teacher population was restricted to only graduate and post graduate level. Permanent as well as temporary teachers were included in the study.

Data was collected from the SC/ST teachers working in departments/ conducted colleges/ affiliated colleges of SNDT Women's University, University of Mumbai and University of Pune.

Subjects of teaching were determined from 'Pure and Applied Sciences' as well as from 'Social Sciences and Humanities'. Pure and Applied Sciences group included Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science, Engineering, Mathematics, Pharmacy, Physics, Zoology, etc. whereas Social and Humanities group included Accountancy, Advertising, Commerce, Economics, Languages, Law, Library Science, Management, Political Sciences, Psychology, Social Work, etc.

Simple random sampling technique was used to select sample from the teacher population. The sample from the library category was chosen from the colleges which had teachers as respondents.

Data Collection

About 200 SC/ ST teachers and 42 libraries (37 college libraries and five university libraries) were surveyed. Data was collected in the form of questionnaires, discussions and observations. There were 116 male SC/ ST teachers and 84 female SC/ ST teachers forming 58% male teachers and 42%

female teachers who participated in the study. Teacher respondents covered 48 respondents from SNDT Women's University, 100 respondents from University of Mumbai and 52 respondents from University of Pune.

Data Analysis and Findings

The study covered 142 (71%) Assistant Professors, 51 (25.5%) Associate Professor/ Reader, five (2.5%) Professors and two (1%) Principals. Majority of the Professors had 5 to 20 years of teaching experience.

There were 15 information needs covering three aspects of the academic and professional needs of the SC/ ST Professors namely 1) Teaching and Related Activities 2) Research and Publications and 3) Career Advancement were mentioned in questionnaire to choose from. The teachers chose five information needs amongst the 15 needs that were listed.

Frequencies of use of the sources were collected in ranks i.e. Always, Sometimes, Rarely, and Never. To this data scores were assigned i.e 3= Always, 2= Sometimes, 1= Rarely, 0= Never. Then the data collected was converted into scores i.e. 3= score 3, 2= score 2, 1= score 1 and 0= score 0. The total scores were calculated for each source of information. Maximum total score for each source could be 600 and minimum total score could be zero.

The frequencies of the number of the teachers who chose various needs are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *Information Needed by SC/ ST Professor to Fulfill their Academic and Professional Needs*

Rank	Frequency	Information Required on the Various Needs
1	135	To conduct research in a particular field of knowledge, and publish findings in professional journals, books, and/or electronic media. Or present a paper
2	89	To know Government Rules/ schemes pertaining to empowerment of Scheduled Caste/ Tribe Teachers
3	88	To know how to use ICT in teaching (Creating Word document, PPTs, use of CDs and internet, use of other audio-video material)
4	81	To know UGC notification/ rules regarding Career advancement
5	79	To know financial aids to pursue further studies/ publish paper/ participate in workshops/ seminar/ conferences
6	73	To prepare and deliver lectures on topics
7	69	To plan, evaluate, and revise curricula, course content, course materials, and methods of instruction.
8	66	To improve Soft skills such as language skills, communication skills, presentation skills, etc.
9	66	To participate in orientation/refresher course
10	64	To advise students on academic and vocational curricula and on career issues.
11	57	To collaborate with colleagues to address teaching and research issues.
12	47	To evaluate and grade students' class work, assignments, and papers
13	45	To know opportunities to participate in institute's administrative committees/ bodies/ teams, etc.

14	39	To know Government Rules pertaining to job/ duties and other service related matters
15	22	To know institution's Rules

Considering the first five information needs listed in Table 1, it was found that the SC/ ST teachers required information mainly on three aspects, i.e. 1) research and publication, 2) rules and notifications from the Government as well as from other concerned bodies, 3) application of ICT in teaching and related activities.

There were various formal and informal information sources that were referred to by the SC/ ST teachers in the course of satisfying their academic and professional needs. In the present study, formal sources of information included books, journal articles, newspapers, circulars, library notice boards, conferences/ seminars/ workshops, etc, and online sites. On the other hand personal communication with seniors/ colleagues, other professionals, friends, relatives were part of informal information sources. Latest communication tools such as e-mail alerts, social networking and blogs were also covered in informal sources of information. The following charts present each source of information and its role in satisfying different information needs graphically.

Figure 1. Total Scores for Books as Information Source

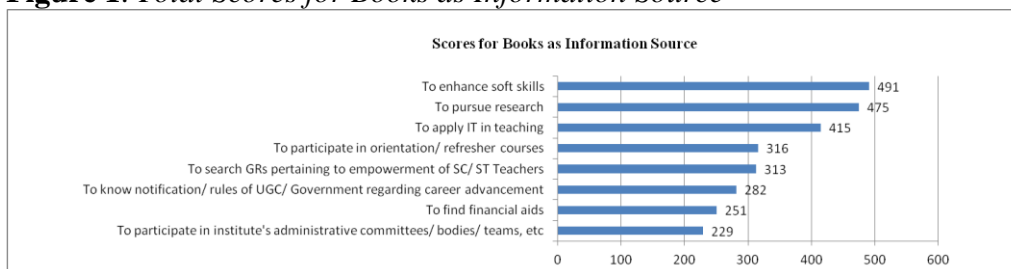


Figure 2. Scores for Newspaper as Information Source

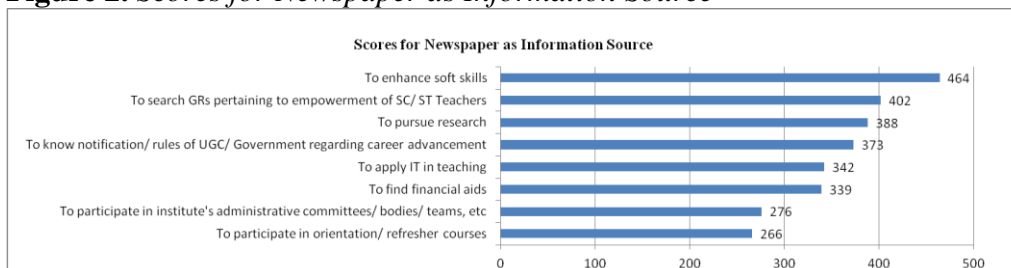


Figure 3. Scores for Journal Articles as Information Source

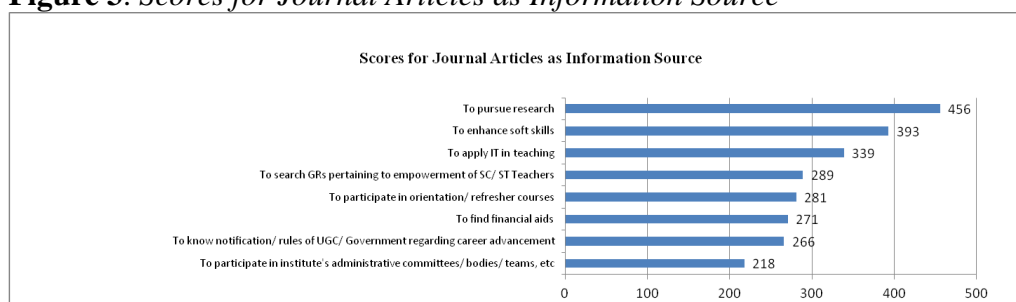


Figure 4. Scores for Seminar/ Workshops/ Conferences, etc as Information Source

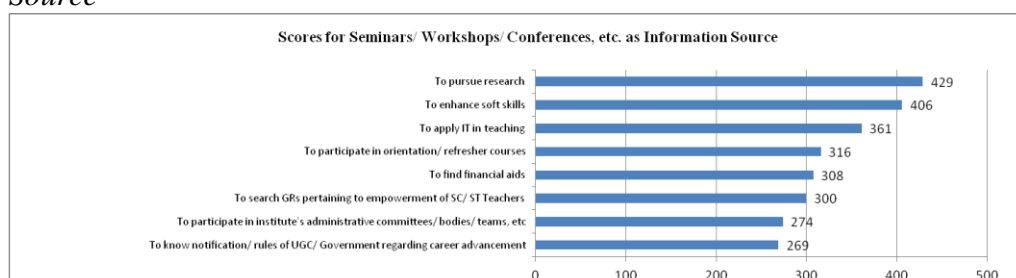


Figure 5. Scores for Circulars as Information Source

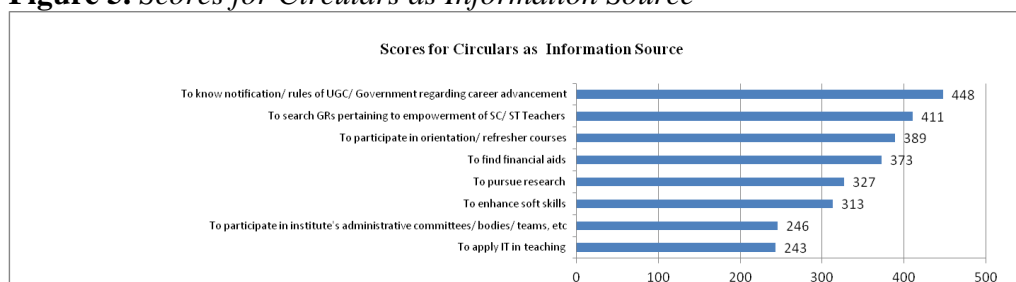


Figure 6: Scores for Internet Sites as Information Source

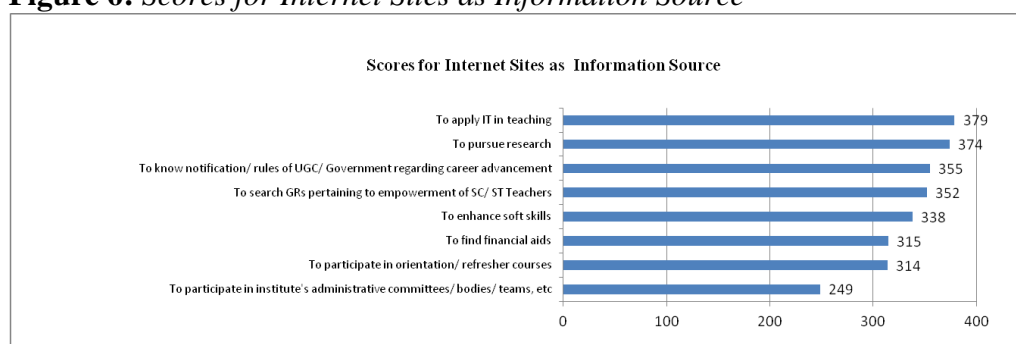


Figure 7. Scores for Institute's Library Notice Board as Information Source

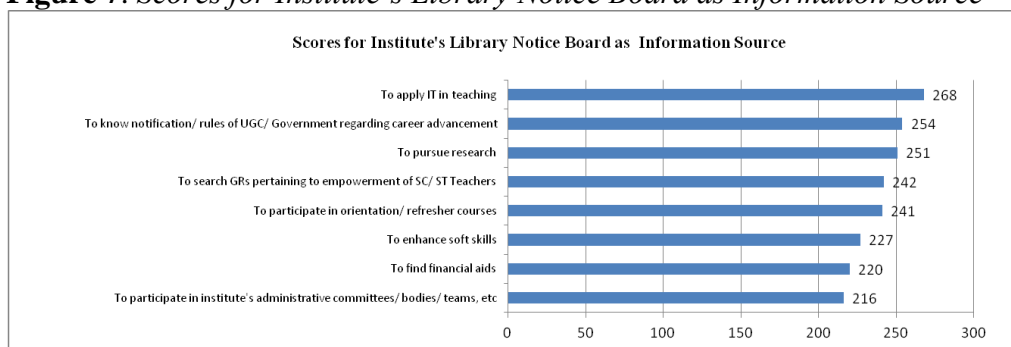


Figure 8. Scores for University Library Notice Boards as Information Source

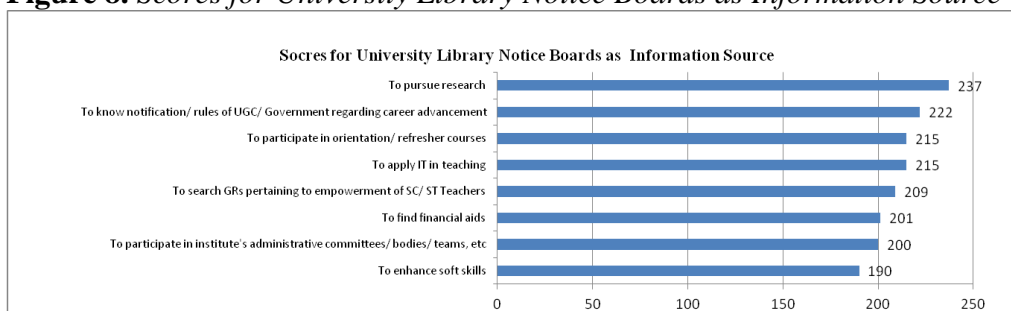


Figure 9. Scores for Personal Communication with Seniors/ Colleagues as Information Source

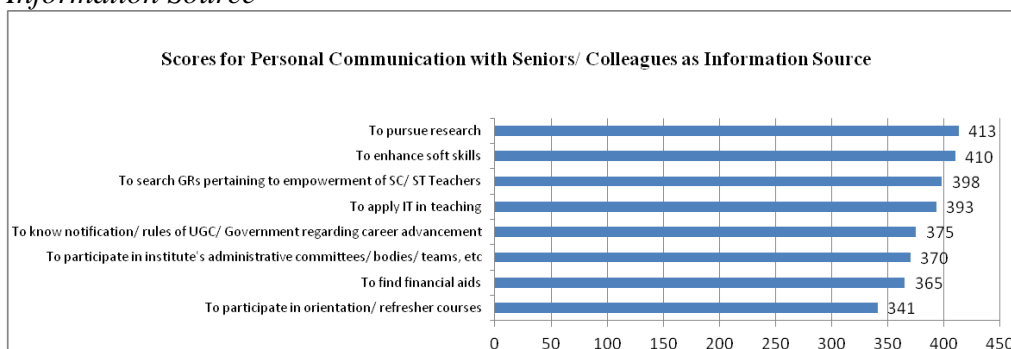


Figure 10. Scores for Personal Communication with Other Professionals as Information Source

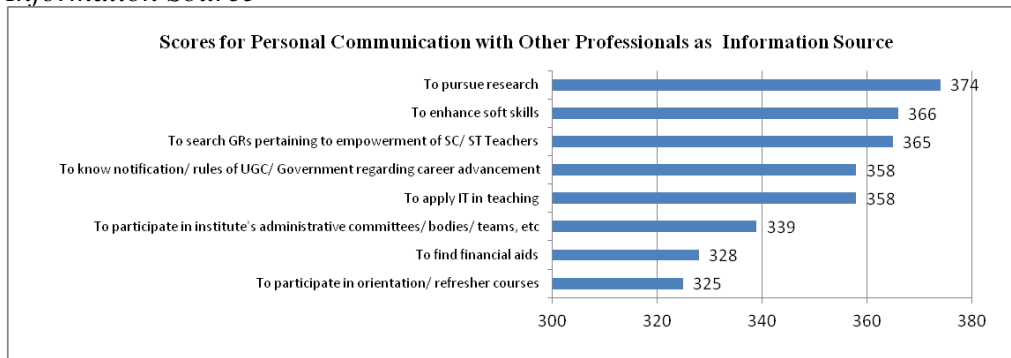


Figure 11. *Scores for Personal Communication with Friends as Information Source*

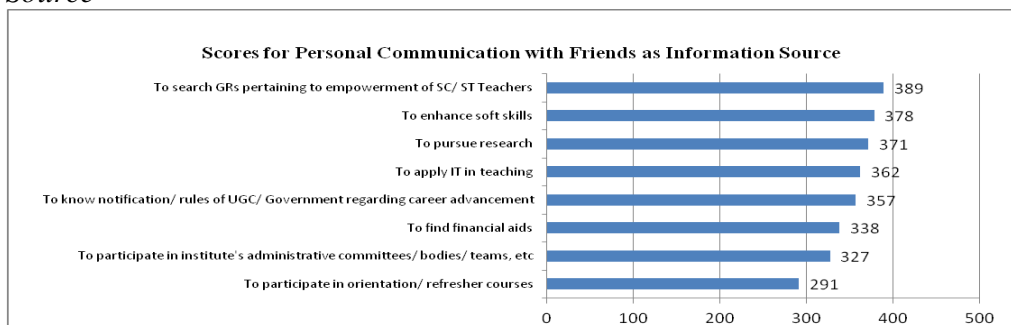


Figure 12. *Scores for Personal Communication with Relatives as Information Source*

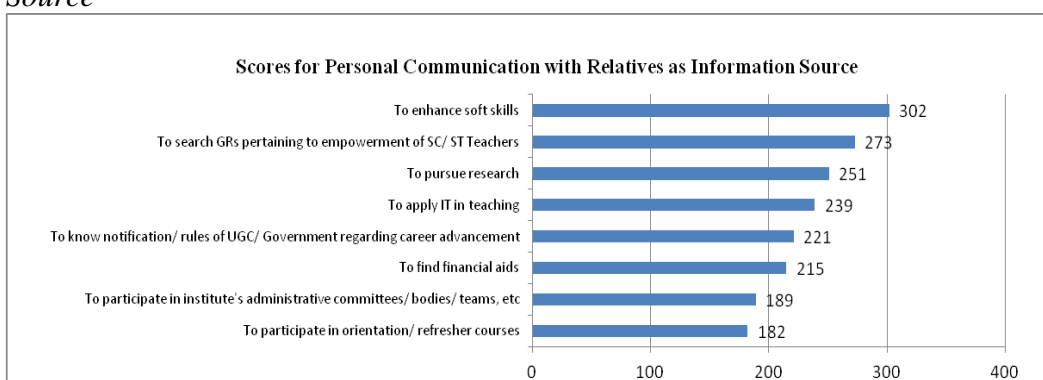


Figure 13. *E-mail Alerts as Information Source*

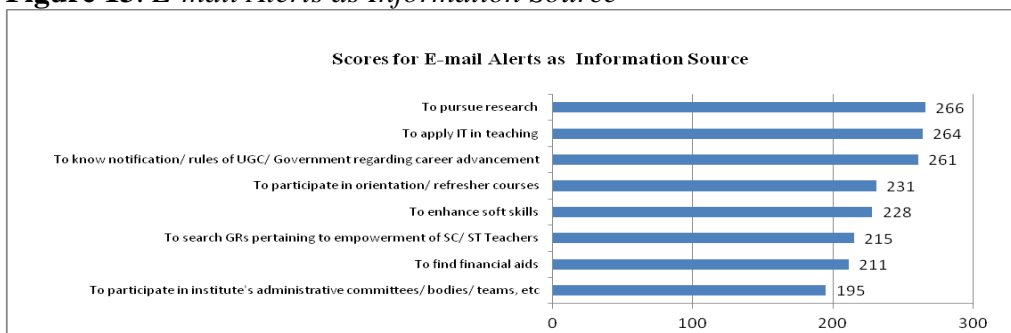


Figure 14. *Scores for Blogs as Information Source*

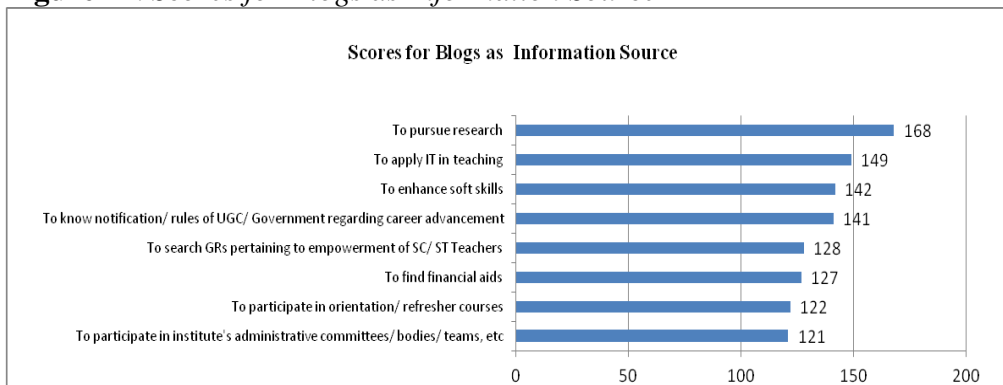
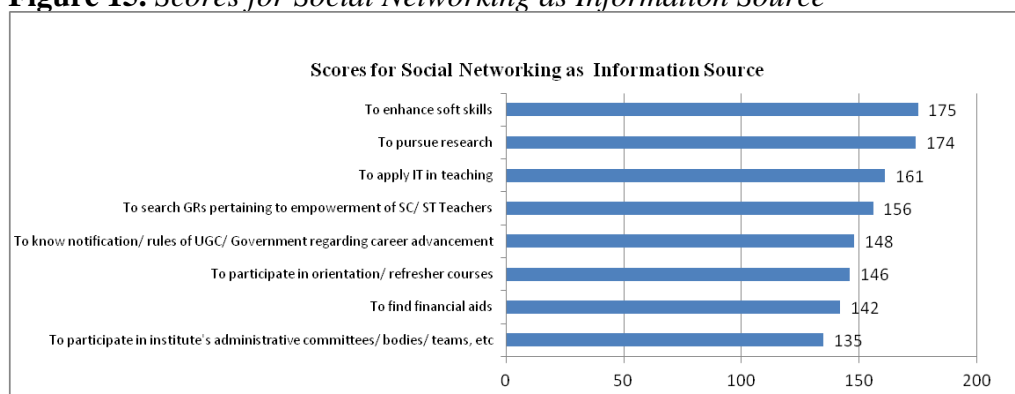


Figure 15. *Scores for Social Networking as Information Source*

The total scores of each source of information within each formal source showed that the books were used for 'Soft Skills Development' scoring higher than 'Research' (Refer Figure 1). Newspapers were also in demand for 'Soft Skills Development' (Refer Figure 2). While Journal Articles scored higher in 'Research' again 'Soft Skill Development' was second highest (Refer Figure 3). The Seminars/ Workshops, etc. also indicated 'Research' followed by 'Soft Skills Development' (Refer Figure 4). Circulars as expected were consulted for Government Rules and Regulations (Refer Figure 5).

The scoring for Notice Boards of the Institute Library did show some anomaly. The highest score was given for 'ICT in Teaching' (Refer Figure 7). For the University Library Notice Boards the highest score was for 'Research' (Refer Figure 8). In both cases knowing about GRs/ UGC Notifications, etc. came second. The Internet was also a major source for information for 'ICT in Teaching' followed by 'Research' (Refer Figure 6).

For the informal sources Personal Communication with Colleagues/ Seniors had scored highest amongst all informal sources of communication. Here also Research and Soft Skills Development were the most preferred for communication (Refer Figure 9). The same was true for Personal Communication with Other Professionals (Refer Figure 10). With 'Personal Communication with Relatives' as information source 'Soft Skills Development' is the major reason for contact followed by ' Notification and rules of Government/UGC, etc.' This was interchanged when 'Friends' became information source (Refer Figure 11 and 12).

For electronic means for communication such as e-mails, blogs and social networking had scored low in informal means of communication. When these were analysed individually it was found that 'Research' was a major reason for their use (Refer Figure 13, 14 and 15).

On comparing gender, it was found that:

- A) Female Professors considered themselves weak in research, knowledge of GRs and participation in the administrative bodies. More female Professors had selected the following needs in comparison with the male Professors.
 - i) Conduct research/ publish papers, books, journals/ present papers

- ii) Awareness of GRs related to service matters
 - iii) Awareness of GRs related to the empowerment of SC/ ST community
 - iv) Understanding of Institute's rules
 - v) Knowledge of Financial aids
 - vi) Participate in administrative bodies of the institute and the university.
- B) More male Professors required information on the following in comparison to the female Professors
- i) Prepare and deliver lectures
 - ii) Evaluate students' work, assignments and papers
 - iii) Collaborate with colleagues on teaching and research issues
 - iv) Application of ICT in teaching
 - v) Participate in orientation and refresher courses
 - vi) Rules for career advancement
- C) There was no difference amongst the gender in following issues
- i) Plan, evaluate and revise course, course materials, methods of instruction, etc.
 - ii) Advise students on their studies and career matter
 - iii) Soft skills

Role of the Library

Considering the finding discussed above, the researcher has identified wide opportunities for the academic libraries to serve SC/ ST Professors in the process of satisfying their needs. Libraries may not be able categories its services for SC/ ST Professors exclusively, but it can provide facilities and services to all professors wherein SC/ ST Professors can take benefit of it.

Library Space for Professors

Professors need a separate reading area where computers, printers, scanners, and internet connections are provided. In most of the colleges, professors have common staff room, where they can concentrate on reading and their research work. They would be thankful to library if such reading area is provided to them.

Library Orientation Programmes

Presently libraries introduce its activities to the professor who join the institute. During this orientation, usual facts such as library rules, library stacks, catalogue search, database search (if any) were covered. Current issues such as copyright, plagiarism, open source software, free online resources were not touched upon at all. A series of workshops on these areas are required for professors.

ICT and Training

Most of the SC/ ST Professors had at least basic computer skills. They had limited access to computers and the Internet at their work place as well as at

home. Only university Professors had desktop with printer and the Internet connection on their desks. At college level, such resources were shared in the department or in the library.

Many Professors were dependent on Google and Yahoo to find subject information. Most of the libraries had computer and the Internet connection in the library. Library staff could have provided training in searching through Google scholar or free online journals and databases. However such efforts were not made. Libraries having databases had provided training to the professors at the initial stage. After some period, use of the databases deteriorated as continuous training was not provided. The SC/ ST Professors expected periodic training for them from library. However their expectation never conveyed to the librarians by them.

Some librarians were under the impression that professors were trained in ICT applications. However, while interacting with the SC/ ST Professors, the researcher found that these Professors needed training in application of modern tools of ICT. About 60% of the SC/ ST Professors said that there should be programmes especially for Professors wherein e-resources needed to be introduced. In colleges, where computer and the Internet facilities were not available to individual professors, professors were expecting the library to provide the same for them. In reality, even when some libraries had made computer and or the Internet facility available to the Professors, use was minimal.

Only two to three professors had their blog or site. For Libraries this could have been a good topic of workshops for the Professors on managing blogs and personal web pages. LIS professionals were trained in ICT applications in their LIS courses. The Professors showed enthusiasm to update various aspects of ICT skills. Few college librarians had very good knowledge of technology. Therefore library professionals need to develop e-resources and e-services to a certain extent. They may serve the Professors with few personalised services.

Information about Government Rules and Regulation:

Few SC/ ST Professors accessed sites of government offices and organisations but majority of the professors were not aware of relevant sites that would offer up-to-date information about rules and regulations on SC/ ST empowerment. More than 50% SC/ ST Professors said that libraries did not inform them about rules and regulations of Government/ UGC. Professors wished that the library could have files of all rules and regulation of government and institutes, if possible, in e-form. This would have given them easy access to all rules and regulations.

In most cases, the authorities of the institutes did not share GRs and notification with the libraries. Whatever notifications or rules and regulations that were received by the library were displayed on the library notice board.

Librarians felt that such rules and regulation were maintained by the institutes' offices, thus they did not think of collecting them in the library. Such special collections are generally built considering user needs. Library may conduct a user survey with professors to find requirement on this matter.

Library Support in Teaching Activities:

Print material was used compared to non-print material. Many colleges had basic infrastructure that did not support use of e-resources in teaching and other activities. College libraries lacked e-databases. Therefore, majority of the professors were using traditional teaching aids and some had used PPTs in classroom teaching. Modern aids such as online texts, videos, mobile technology, social Networking, etc were rarely used by the professor.

Presently library professionals help professors in literature search on their subject of teaching when they visit the library. Sometimes bibliographies were supplied. Latest topics for students' project work were suggested.

Considering the situation library has very good prospect by providing open accessed/ subscribed e-resources, regular hands on training in this regard. Training in the areas like accessing open access resources, preparing effective PPTs, WizIQ, MOOC, are today's need of professors.

Library Support in Research Work

More male SC/ ST Professors had done their Ph. Ds compared to female SC/ ST Professors. During interactions with women professors, the researcher felt that one of the obstacles for women professors to do PhD, minor or major research projects was women professors were fully occupied with the teaching workloads as well as their household responsibilities. Library may focus this group and design its services.

Google had become the replacement for the library in literature search for most of the Professors. However, the Professors were not proficient in the use of search engines. This can be filled through training. Though Professors felt that they could find everything through the Internet, they did not use the same facility for locating information related to rules and regulation, and to find financial assistance.

Generally professors use libraries most when they were doing research work. Libraries were boon for SC/ST Professors as their literature search was possible due to the libraries. All Librarians and their library staff had helped the SC/ ST Professors to cull out relevant references for the research work. Besides just literature search many librarians helped the SC/ ST Professors in citing references in standard styles like APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.

In various stages of research, many SC/ ST Professors encountered with problems such as selection of research topic, literature search in print as well as e-resources, English language vocabulary, appropriate statistical method to use in research, writing skills, financial support, etc. These professor also lack information about how to get published.

Library may have profile of people and organisations that would rescue SC/ ST Professors in different phases of their research. Library may organise get-together of people from various department such as academic section, grant section, statistics, language, etc. that would help SC/ ST teachers to meet the people whom then can contact when needed for the respective help. This can be organised by partnering with Teachers' Union/Association and SC/ ST Union, etc.

Career Advancement and Personal Development:

The SC/ ST Professors felt that reservation policy had played an important role in their status. Some Professors felt that healthy environment in the institute and effective library services helped them in their career. On the other hand some Professors felt that they could not grow in the profession due to non-supportive environment in the institutes, lack of guidance, lack of English language skills, and poor ICT skills.

All SC/ ST Professors who were in their mid career were more concerned about their soft skills. The newer generation have been trained in many of the soft skills as students because the method of teaching and learning for them was using projects and seminars. The older Professors expressed the need to enhance their soft skills more as compared to the number of SC/ ST Professors in the younger age group. It might be because in earlier times soft skills development was not given much importance in the academia. However, today it is 'buzz' topic.

All universities had Professors' unions. The University of Mumbai and the University of Pune had an association of Professors belonging to reserved category. However these unions were generally engaged in issues related to pay and promotion matters of the Professors. The respondents covered were involved in ad-hoc committees. Their representation in statutory and executive committees was less. In most of the committees, SC/ ST Professors were members due to reservation policy that is mandatory to follow.

Professors found it a tedious job to get the rules especially of the government. Most of the libraries did not inform Professors about the rules and regulation.

About 60% of the Professors were expecting that libraries should organise programmes for Professors wherein searching the Internet, use of e-resources, any other topics that would help them professionally as well as at personal level. Majority of the libraries did not conduct programmes especially for the professors except one or two libraries. Librarians also mentioned that attendance of faculty members from both open as well as reserved category for the programmes was limited. In this regard libraries must collaborate with the union and the departments of institute, prepare annual calendar of programmes and start activities that will help professors academically as well as in personality development. In these programme, by inviting professors of the same community who have achieved excellence in academics and in profession would motivate other SC/ ST Professors to follow their path.

CAS/ SDI services

The CAS/ SDI services needed personal attention, time, money and regularity to make the professors confident about the library's contribution for their teaching and research. Professors may be alerted with the sites that are useful for knowing forthcoming conferences, subject matter, rules, etc. Few librarians had sent print copies of relevant information to the head of the department so that every teacher would get informed through the head of the department. Few librarians informed orally as and when they met the SC/ ST

Professors. Few librarians tried sending e-mails and SMS. In some institutes there were separate notice boards in the staff rooms. Information useful for professors was displayed in staff room's notice boards by the authorities.

Less than 50% i.e. (7 to 18) libraries had used library notice boards for informing Professors about new books, articles on relevant topics available in the library. Besides this information regarding new books, forthcoming conferences, research projects and research awards were also displayed on their notice boards. While the SC/ ST Professors browsed library notice boards, library notice boards scored lowest amongst the various formal information sources.

Libraries still used conventional methods for providing facilities and services. In conversation with the librarians the researcher felt that some librarians considered SDI services as extra work. Some librarians reasoned that there was no time, manpower, money to start any additional activity in their routine work. However few had taken interest to understand and use modern ways to provide personalised services to the Professors. These few took initiative in information literacy, e-collections, e-services and personalised services exclusively for teaching staff. About 5-6 librarians having less than ten years in the profession were sending print copies of content pages and list of additions. They also used e-mails, SMS for information dissemination.

Besides this, awareness was needed to be raised among faculty members about the role of the library in their professional development. Since ancient times, libraries are 'the Google' for the users. In discussion the study found out that libraries were not the first place for user to approach for their information needs or in case of confusion while carrying out their research and teaching activities. On the other hand the technology that has brought the world within reach with the click of a mouse was also not referred to as the first place by the Professors. The technology could have been used thoughtfully by the libraries to cater services to Professors with ease, in time and in an effective manner.

During interaction, all SC/ ST Professors had acknowledged reservation policy of the government and efforts of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar for their present status in the society. Caste discrimination in the society was acknowledged by all. These professors have strong fellow feeling.

From the experiences of the Professors, the study revealed three aspects of Professors' professional growth. First, some of the factors that made positive impact on the Professors' career were Reservation policies (100%), healthy work environment (50%) where regular discussions were done, and where there was support of the management as well as seniors and colleagues. About 35% of the Professors acknowledged the great support of their family members, friends, and their own hard work in their profession also contributed. Nearly 35% felt that library had played positive role in their professional achievements.

Second aspect was about the problems faced in the professional growth. About 20% said that they were deficient in terms of ICT skills, and had poor information related to research work; they wanted some career guidance. There were 20% of the Professors who felt that they were not well versed with the

rules and regulations. About 10% of the Professors felt that lack of English language skills and personal skills were obstacle in their professional growth. About 15% of the Professors felt that they were discriminated on the basis of caste and there was no support from the authorities, seniors and colleagues. About 10% mentioned that one of the ‘hitches’ in their profession and career was time constraint. Less than 10% of the Professors felt that lack of infrastructure in the institute hindered their professional activities.

Third, the SC/ ST Professors from educated family background and sound financial status who had better exposure to the world did not deny caste discrimination in teaching profession. Few of them commented that academic and professional growth of teacher does not depend of the caste or tribe. Though appointments were made through reservation quota, Professors should not depend on only reservations for further growth. They also stated that their friendly nature, qualification, etc. could defeat all obstacles in the path of their professional development.

Overall teacher-library/librarian relationship did not have problems. However during interaction few SC/ ST Professors did remark that their upper caste librarian differentiated them and they were not happy with the librarian. On the other hand all librarians commented that all professors were treated equally and same services were provided to all professors. Some of the other comments were that the SC/ ST Professors were cooperative and friendly; Professors were sincere and participated in the library activities. In general it was felt that libraries might not be able to serve the SC/ ST Professors separately. If a library takes upon itself to have special collections, special services for the faculty, both will benefit, as Professors will become the library’s torchbearers.

Today librarians themselves need to become aware latest advancement in their own field i.e. in library and information science. The changing needs of teaching staff have to be understood as well. Libraries need to articulate their goal for information literacy of the Professors as well students.

Considering the findings of this study, the researcher feels that libraries can play important role in the empowerment of the SC/ ST faculty. The SC/ ST Professors could not be segregated from others solely on the basis of their castes and tribes, but the SC/ ST Professors would be benefitted if special attention is given to the professional needs of faculty members. Amalgamation of the latest resources in library activities and little more proactive stance on the part of the academic libraries would project the library’s importance and existence in the mind of the faculty members. The library could be a collaborative partner in the furtherance of academic and professional development of the faculty members.

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