

# **Wikipedia Utilization Pattern of Post Graduate Science Students: A Case Study of University of Kerala**

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## ***Abstract***

*The paper investigates the awareness and use of wikipedia by the post graduate science students at the University of Kerala through structured questionnaires. The survey was conducted through a structured questionnaire circulated among 241 M. Sc students taken from 10 science departments of University of Kerala and the response rate was 78.42%. A stratified accidental random sample method was used for selection of respondents. Google is the most preferred search engine for the science students to locate information electronically. A majority of 50% respondents frequently use wikipedia and 35.44% of them are eager to know more about it. Majority of the students (72.48%) opined that they can get adequate information from the Wikipedia for their academic purpose and 80.31% are getting current information from it. The study reveals that 74.60% of total students are aware of wikipedia as an open source Information resources. The paper concludes that wikipedia have become an integral part of the information needs of post graduate students at the University of Kerala.*

**Keywords:** Wikipedia, Information Seeking Behavior, University of Kerala

## **1. Introduction**

The fast growth of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and particularly the internet has changed traditional methods of research, retrieval and communication of scholarly information. Now a day's Internet has emerged as the most powerful medium for retrieval of information. In education, the Internet has brought about a change in pedagogy at many institutions of higher education. Users are not only learning from the traditional sources but they are also learning from each other using tools on the Internet. In order to retrieve relevant information, users have to make use of different open source web resources like wikipedia. The academic institutions and libraries should also facilitate the maximum use of these recourse, hence the relevance of information literacy programmes.

Wikipedia is, by far, the most successful example of this new paradigm of web services and one of the biggest communities of users of the Internet, and it has showed the power of collaborative content development. Many scientific works are increasingly referencing Wikipedia, and many learning systems employ it as a primary source of information. (Andrew, 2010). Nowadays one of the most widely used ICT based tools in education is the – multilingual, web based, free content encyclopedia project- wikipedia. It has become one of the most used, and most visited free- sources on the internet, overtaking the expert-based knowledge sources such as Encyclopedia Britannica and the like. What is perhaps surprising is that wikipedia appears to be increasingly used by scholars for their research.

The University of Kerala (originally the University of Travancore) was constituted in 1937 by a promulgation of the Maharaja of Travancore, Sri. Chithira Thirunal Balarama Varma with headquarters in Thiruvananthapuram (Trivandrum). It was the 16<sup>th</sup> university to be established in India and the first in the state of Kerala. The university today is one of the prestigious universities in the country, completed seventy five years of fruitful existence, with 42 teaching and research departments, 57 recognised research centres and more than 200 affiliated colleges.

This paper gives an idea about the use pattern of wikipedia by post graduate students in the Kerala University science departments and also provides accuracy and coverage of information available in wikipedia.

## **2. Wikipedia**

In March 2000, Jimmy Wales and Larry Sanger started the first free online encyclopedia, Nupedia. It did not adopt the wiki system and accepted contributions only from highly qualified experts, based on an elaborate process of peer review. In January 2001, the founders started Wikipedia as a side project, but that created a competition between the two projects. As Wikipedia grew in size and attracted contributors, it became independent of Nupedia, which was discontinued after September 2003 due to the lack of participants and the extensive review system.

A wiki is a software that enables end- user to modify, edit and delete parts of a website via a user- friendly interface. The first of its kind was introduced in 1994, by Ward Cunningham, who also bestowed the first wiki website its name: WikiWikiWeb. Today wikis are a part of everyday life, especially after the successful implementation of the software by the Encyclopedia Wikipedia initiative in 2001. (Suchecki, 2012). Wikipedia has grown rapidly into one of the largest reference websites. As of February 2012, Wikipedia contains more than 77,000 active contributors working on over 22,000,000 articles in 285 languages, and receives more than 470 million visitors monthly and there are 4,146, 437 articles in English. Every day, thousands of visitors from around the world collectively makes tens of thousands of edits and create new articles to augment the knowledge held by the Wikipedia encyclopedia.

The major points of criticism of wikipedia, are the claims that the principle of being open for editing by everyone makes wikipedia un authoritative and unreliable, that it exhibits systemic bias, and that its group dynamics hinder its goals. Major areas of the study in wikipedia criticism including: wikipedia's usefulness as a resource, difficulty of fact checking, privacy concerns, quality concerns and copyright violations.

## **3. Review of Literature**

Wikipedia, as a social phenomenon of collaborative knowledge creating, has been studied extensively from various points of views. Several studies have been carried out by different institutes all around the world focusing on the use of e- resources especially Wikipedia.

Hugget (2012) studied the influence of free encyclopedia on science and revealed that scientists find Wikipedia to be a sufficient and well established source within the free online encyclopedia category. Anuradha, Gopakumar and Baradol (2011) studied the awareness and use of open access and free resources

on the internet by the academic community at BITS Pilani, Goa campus. Lim and Simon (2011) examined credibility judgment in relation to peripheral cues and genre of Wikipedia articles, and attempted to understand user information verification behavior based on the theory of bounded rationality. Park (2011) studied the visibility of wikipedia in scholarly publications.

Head and Eisenberg (2010) discussed how today's college students use wikipedia for course-related research reported from student focus groups and a large-scale survey about how and why students (enrolled at six different US colleges) use wikipedia during the course-related research process. Nayar (2010) recommended Wikipedia is an information source that publishes in different languages in a collaborative manner of the users. Brendan, et al. (2010) described the rapid rise of Wikipedia as an information source has placed the traditional role of librarians as information gatekeepers and guardians under scrutiny with much of the professional literature suggesting that librarians are polarized over the issue of whether Wikipedia is a useful reference tool. Jim (2010) studied the results of a usability study which inquired into undergraduate student information seeking with Wikipedia on the iPod touch.

Studies by Eric (2009), Lim (2009), Jandric (2008), Lally and Dunford (2007), Kaur (2006), Chesney (2006) and Voss (2006) are some of the other studies relevant to the present paper.

The review of literature showed that, most of them focused on the contents and use pattern of wikipedia in the academic environment. However, it was noted that an investigation into the use pattern of wikipedia is yet to be made. The present study is an attempt to bridge the gap that exists.

#### **4. Objectives of the Study**

The major objectives of the study are:

1. To study the awareness and use of Internet among the P. G students.
2. To identify the frequently used search engines among students.
3. To study the preference of use of Internet services.
4. To identify the information sources regularly access from Internet.
5. To study the awareness of wikipedia among the post graduate students.
6. To study the impact of wikipedia on academic activities.
7. To identify the opinion regarding the quality of Wikipedia contents.
8. To examine the reasons for using wikipedia as a information source.
9. To analyze the method of access information from wikipedia.
10. To explore the difficulties while accessing wikipedia.

#### **5. Methodology**

A survey based questionnaire is used for the study. Questionnaire is prepared after comprehensive literature search and discussion with subject experts. Open questions were included in the questionnaire. There are

ten departments under the faculty of science in the University of Kerala. A stratified accidental random sample method was used for selection of respondents. The survey was conducted among 241 students of first and third semester post graduate students in the ten science departments in the University of Kerala. Out of the 241 questionnaires distributed, 189 responded and the response rate was 78.42 percent. The collected data are analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively.

## 6. Data Analysis

### 6.1 Gender-wise analysis of responses

The Table 2 shows the gender- wise distribution of responses of students in the Faculty of Science.

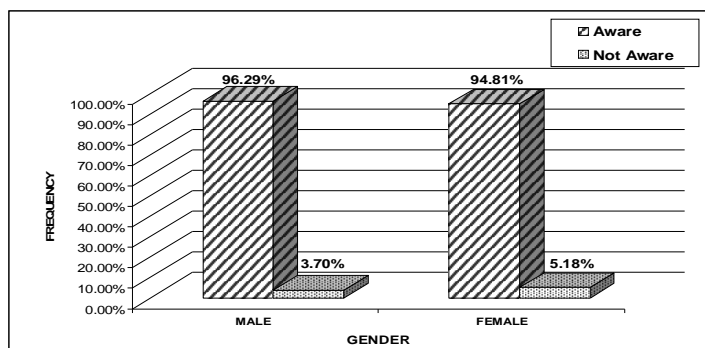
**Table 2: Gender-Wise Distribution**

Sl. No.	Name of the Departments	Male		Female		Total
		Number	%	Number	%	
1	Aquatic Biology and Fisheries	03	16.67	15	83.33	18
2	Biochemistry	01	06.67	14	93.33	15
3	Botany	01	07.14	13	92.86	14
4	Chemistry	04	18.19	18	81.81	22
5	Demography	05	38.47	08	61.53	13
6	Geology	08	44.44	10	55.56	18
7	Mathematics	16	35.55	29	64.45	45
8	Physics	10	23.73	09	23.63	19
9	Statistics	02	10.00	18	90.00	20
10	Zoology	04	80.00	01	20.00	05
Total		54	28.57	135	71.42	189

The Table indicates that, majority of respondents (71.42%) are female and the share of male respondents are 28.57%. The department of Biochemistry, Botany and Statistics are female dominated as more than 90% of them are female. Thus it is revealed that majority of the students in the science departments are female (71.42%) and only 54 of them are (28.57%) male students.

### 6.2 Awareness of the Internet

The response to the awareness of Internet as a source of information is represented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Awareness of the Internet**

The figure shows that 95.23% of the total students responded that they are aware of Internet as a source of information. It is clear that 4.76% of total students responded that they are not aware of Internet.

### 6.3 Frequency of use of Internet

The frequency of the use services in Internet by the students are shown in the Table 3.

**Table 3: Use Internet Services**

Sl. No.	Name of the Departments	Responses					Total
		Daily	Once in Two Days	Twice Weekly	Once in a Week	Rarely	
1	Aquatic Biology and Fisheries	01 05.55%	04 22.22%	03 16.16%	10 55.56%	-	18
2	Biochemistry	01 06.66%	01 06.66%	03 20%	10 73.33%	-	15
3	Botany	03 21.42%	02 14.28%	02 14.28%	07 42.85%	-	14
4	Chemistry	05 22.72%	04 18.18%	05 22.72%	08 36.36%	-	22
5	Demography	04 30.76%	-	01 07.69%	08 61.53%	-	13
6	Geology	01 05.55%	02 11.11%	02 11.11%	12 66.66%	-	17
7	Mathematics	08 17.77%	07 15.55%	12 26.66%	15 33.33%	03 06.66%	45
8	Physics	04 21.05%	02 10.52%	02 10.52%	11 57.89%	-	19
9	Statistics	04 20.00%	04 20.00%	05 25.00%	07 35.00%	01 05.00%	20
10	Zoology	04 80.00%	01 20.00%	-	-	-	05
Total		35 18.51%	27 14.28%	35 18.51%	88 46.56%	04 02.11%	189 100%

Majority of the students (46.56%) of the science departments are using Internet once in a week. The daily users constitute 18.51% and the same numbers of students use it twice weekly. The study also reveals that, majority students use Internet once in a week. Most of the students of Department of Zoology are daily users of internet. It is interesting to see that some of the students of Department of Mathematics and Statistics are not interesting to use Internet and they are rarely using it.

#### 6.4 Use of Search Engines

In order to study the use of search engines by the students, an analysis is made and the results are shown in the Table 4.

**Table 4: Use of Search Engines**

Sl. No.	Name of the Departments	Search Engines			
		Google	Yahoo	Alta Vista	Others
1	Aquatic Biology and Fisheries	18	02	01	01
2	Biochemistry	15	03	-	-
3	Botany	14	04	02	01
4	Chemistry	22	04	01	-
5	Demography	13	01	-	-
6	Geology	18	02	02	02
7	Mathematics	44	06	01	04
8	Physics	17	02	-	-
9	Statistics	18	03	03	02
10	Zoology	05	01	-	-

From the Table 4 it is clear that most of the students prefer to use Google search engine (97.35%). 14.81% of total students are using Yahoo and 05.29% of the students are using Alta Vista and other search engines. From the analysis it is clear that, Google is the most preferred search engine used by the M.Sc. students followed by Yahoo.

#### 6.5 Preference of the use of internet services

The frequently using services in internet by the students are tabulated in Table 5.

**Table 5: Preference of the Use of Internet Services**

Services	Preference of the use of services on the Internet							
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
Searching	8	0	10	05	2	2	1	1
E-mail	9	6	22	03	2	-	-	-
Social Networks	5	0	16	12	7	9	-	-
Entertainment	4	1	12	17	4	4	7	-
Create on Web Site	4	3	05	04	5	2	6	3
News	2	1	21	14	0	7	1	-
Chatting	2	6	08	10	6	4	3	2
Others	-	-	02	02	-	2	5	2

It is clear from the analysis that majority of the student's first choice of preference of internet is searching purpose. It is interesting to see that e-mail is the second most preferred choice of use of internet service by 59 students and 56 students second choice is also e-mail service. Social networks and entertainment are the other preferred services in the internet.

## 6.6 Access of information from the internet

Sources of information regularly access from Internet are shown in the Table 6

**Table 6: Sources of Information Regularly Access from Internet**

Sl. No.	Sources of Information	Male	Female	Total
1	Online Databases	21	40	61
2	Dictionaries	12	21	33
3	Encyclopedias	36	86	122
4	E-books	15	32	47
5	E-journals	11	19	30
6	Others	04	09	13
Total		99	207	306

The Table 6 indicates that, majority students are using internet for accessing Encyclopedias. Online databases are the second most preferred information sources used by the students followed by e-books, dictionaries and e-journals are the other information sources preferred by the students.

### 6.7 Awareness of Wikipedia

An attempt is made to identify the awareness and use of Wikipedia by the post graduate science student in the University of Kerala. The analyzed data are shown in the following table 7.

**Table 7: Awareness of Wikipedia**

Sl. No.	Name of the Departments	Male		Female		Total
		Number	%	Number	%	
1	Aquatic Biology and Fisheries	03	16.67	15	83.33	18
2	Biochemistry	01	06.67	14	93.33	15
3	Botany	01	07.14	13	92.86	14
4	Chemistry	04	18.19	18	81.81	22
5	Demography	05	38.47	08	61.53	13
6	Geology	08	44.44	10	55.56	18
7	Mathematics	16	35.55	29	64.45	45
8	Physics	10	23.73	09	23.63	19
9	Statistics	02	10.00	18	90.00	20
10	Zoology	04	80.00	01	20.00	05
Total		54	28.57	135	71.42	189

The analysis of data shows that, out of 189 respondents, a good number of 170 (89.94%) students are aware of wikipedia and only 19 (10.06%) students are not aware of wikipedia. Wikipedia is used by most of the students for their study and research purposes. It is interesting to see that some of the students who are studying in the P G courses of various science subjects are still not aware of the wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.



### 6.8 Opinion about Wikipedia

Table 8 deals with the opinion about Wikipedia among the master degree students.

**Table 8: Opinion about the Wikipedia**

Sl. No.	Name of the Departments	Responses				Total
		Aware	%	Not Aware	%	
1	Aquatic Biology and Fisheries	17	94.44	01	05.56	18
2	Biochemistry	14	93.33	01	06.67	15
3	Botany	13	92.85	01	07.16	14
4	Chemistry	20	90.90	02	09.10	22
5	Demography	12	92.31	01	07.69	13
6	Geology	15	83.33	03	16.67	18
7	Mathematics	41	91.12	04	08.88	45
8	Physics	17	89.47	02	10.52	19
9	Statistics	17	85.00	03	15.00	20
10	Zoology	04	80.00	01	20.00	05
<b>Total</b>		<b>170</b>	<b>89.94</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>10.06</b>	<b>189</b>

The study on the student's opinion about the wikipedia shows that, more than 50% (96) of the total respondents are interested to wikipedia and they are the regular users of it. 67 students (35.44%) like to know more about wikipedia and they are eager to study more on that. 26 (13.75%) students are interested to attend courses for studying more about Wikipedia.

### 6.9 Response on the influence of Wikipedia

The study on the influence of wikipedia on academic matters shows that, wikipedia is influencing most of the students (92.59%) for their study and research. While 14 (07.40%) students says that wikipedia is not influenced their study. Hence the study revealed that, wikipedia has influenced very much for their study and it has an impact on their academic matters.

### 6.10 Use of wikipedia for study purposes

The table 9 shows the student's use of Wikipedia for study purposes.

Table 9: Use of Information from wikipedia

Sl. No.	Name of the Departments	Opinion		
		Interested in Wikipedia	Like to hear more about Wikipedia	Interested to attend training program on Wikipedia
1	Aquatic Biology and Fisheries	11	06	01
2	Biochemistry	11	03	01
3	Botany	06	06	02
4	Chemistry	13	07	02
5	Demography	06	04	03
6	Geology	09	08	01
7	Mathematics	20	17	08
8	Physics	10	03	06
9	Statistics	08	11	01
10	Zoology	02	02	01
Total		96 50.79%	67 35.44%	26 13.75%

It is found that a good number of students (72.48%) are using wikipedia for study purposes. 27.51% of total students are not using the information gathered from the wikipedia for study purpose. Therefore majority of the students are of the opinion that they can get adequate information from the wikipedia for their academic purpose.

### 6.11 Opinion about the recency of information

An attempt is made to identify the opinion on the recency of information gathered from wikipedia. The results of the analysis are shown in the figure 2.

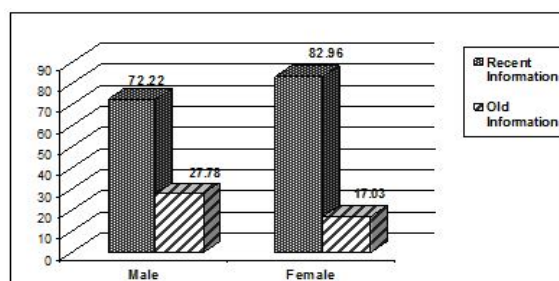


Figure 2: Opinion about the recency of Information

From the figure it is clear that 80.31% (151) of the total responds are of the opinion that they are accessing current information from the wikipedia. While 38 (19.68%) students are getting old information from the wikipedia. The figure indicates that female students are accessing more recent information compared to male students.

### 6.12 Attending training programmes on Wikipedia

An analysis is made to understand whether the students have attended any training programmes for the use of internet or wikipedia. The study revealed that most of the respondents (87.83%) are not attended any training programs on wikipedia and other new information services. Only 12.17% (23) students are attended few training/ orientation programs about wikipedia and other new information services.

### 6.13 Impact of wikipedia on information gathering

The data given the Table 11 shows the impact of wikipedia on information gathering.

**Table 11: Impact of Wikipedia on Information Gathering**

Sl. No.	Name of the Departments	Response				Total
		Little Impact	High Impact	Very High Impact	No Impact	
1	Aquatic Biology and Fisheries	06 33.34%	09 50.00%	02 11.12%	01 05.55%	18
2	Biochemistry	04 26.67%	08 53.33%	01 06.66%	02 13.33%	15
3	Botany	04 28.57%	07 50.00%	02 14.28%	01 07.14%	14
4	Chemistry	09 40.90%	10 45.458%	03 13.63%	-	22
5	Demography	04 30.76%	08 61.53%	01 33.33%	-	13
6	Geology	07 38.89%	10 55.56%	01 05.55%	-	18
7	Mathematics	10 22.23%	22 48.89%	10 22.23%	03 06.66%	45
8	Physics	07 36.84%	10 52.63%	01 05.26%	01 05.26%	19
9	Statistics	05 25.00%	12 60.00%	03 15.00%	-	20
10	Zoology	01 20.00%	04 80.00%	-	-	05
Total		57 30.15%	100 52.93%	24 12.69%	08 4.23%	189 100.00%

It is clear from the Table 11 that, more than 50% (100) students are of the opinion that, the wikipedia has high impact on their information gathering process. While 30.15% (57) students stated that, it has little impact and 24 students (12.69%) says, they have high very impact on the wikipedia. The study reveals that information gathering processes of the students are highly influenced by the use of wikipedia.

#### 6.14 Opinion on the quality of Wikipedia contents

The Table 12 gives the preference of opinion on the quality of wikipedia contents.

**Table 12: Preference on the Quality of Wikipedia Contents**

Sl. No.	Services	Preference					
		I	II	III	IV	V	VI
1	Wide Topic Coverage	41	34	19	07	04	-
2	Instant Access	32	33	12	12	05	-
3	Accuracy	27	26	13	17	02	-
4	Up to Date	25	24	14	11	04	-
5	Authentic	11	07	07	07	19	02
6	Others	01	-	-	-	01	08

It can be seen from the Table that, the quality of wide topic coverage of the contents of wikipedia is the first preference of most of the students. It is followed by instant access of wikipedia and accuracy of the contents. Up- to-dateness of wikipedia contents comes next.

#### 6.15 Methods of access of information from Wikipedia

The analysis on the methods of access of information from Wikipedia is shown in the Table 13.

**Table 13: Methods of access of Information from wikipedia**

Sl. No.	Name of the Departments	Methods				Total
		Print Outs	%	Other Methods	%	
1	Aquatic Biology and Fisheries	10	55.55	08	44.45	18
2	Biochemistry	11	73.33	04	26.67	15
3	Botany	09	64.28	05	35.72	14
4	Chemistry	15	68.19	07	31.81	22
5	Demography	10	76.93	03	23.07	13
6	Geology	11	61.11	07	38.89	18
7	Mathematics	36	80.00	09	20.00	45
8	Physics	12	63.15	08	36.84	19
9	Statistics	12	60.00	07	40.00	20
10	Zoology	04	80.00	01	20.00	05
Total		1300	68.79	59	31.21	189

### 6.16 Obstacles while accessing the Wikipedia

The table 14 indicates the obstacles while using Wikipedia.

**Table 14: Obstacles Faced While Accessing Wikipedia**

Sl. No.	Obstacles	Preference								
		I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX
1	Too Much Information is Available	46	14	03	07	01	-	-	-	02
2	Incomplete And Vague Information	24	13	09	10	03	02	01	02	03
3	Time Consuming	14	11	05	05	03	02	04	-	04
4	Unaware of Search Methods	11	11	08	05	02	02	04	01	-
5	Unwanted Information	11	10	08	03	08	01	01	03	02
6	Unedited Text	08	15	10	05	02	06	-	2	01
7	Poor Readability	02	10	09	02	03	03	03	3	-
8	Unfamiliar To Use	03	06	10	04	02	-	02	03	01
9	Others	02	01	-	03	-	01	01	01	02

The analysis shows that the maximum of 46 respondents responded about the overload of too much information is the most encountered obstacle while using Wikipedia, followed by incomplete and vague information available. The other obstacles faced by the students include: time consuming searches, unaware of search methods and unwanted information.

### 7. Conclusion

In the present educational system, the promotion and use of open source resources and other learning objects are more prevalent. Hence the use of wikipedia is more among the e-resource users, especially among academic community. There is little doubt that wikipedia have played a vital role and changed the way of seeking and disseminating information for students and research scholars. The findings of the study revealed that wikipedia have become an integral part of the information needs of post graduate students at the University of Kerala. Further it finds that wikipedia can be good substitute for conventional resources.

The study of this kind is very useful for the students, teachers, librarians etc. They can make use of the findings in their policy decisions related to the e resources in the library. The study gives interesting and important findings with regard to the various aspect of the use of wikipedia by the post graduate science students in the University of Kerala. The academic institutions and libraries should facilitate maximum use of these resources, hence emphasis on the relevance of information literacy programmes.

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