

A Preliminary Analysis on Information Needs and Seeking Behaviour of Lawyers Using Exploratory Factor Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This preliminary study was carried out to empirically examine the possible factors of legal information needs and information seeking behaviour among lawyers. The main aim is to investigate the measures impacting their effectiveness of information seeking behaviour by employing Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). This user study opted a survey of 182 lawyers who work in Klang Valley area in Malaysia. Findings from EFA confirmed that five-factor solution can be used for further research as a measure of effectiveness of information seeking behavior of lawyers. The statistical adequacy of the EFA is supported by a good KMO (0.773 ($\chi^2 = 1959.88$, $p < 0.001$)), Bartlett and acceptable internal consistency reliability of Cronbach alpha coefficients (all > 0.600). In addition, the total explained variance of the five components was 61.26% and with acceptable internal consistency reliability of Cronbach alpha coefficients (all > 0.600). The five components are significantly positive correlated with the effectiveness of information seeking behaviour. Thus, preliminary outcomes of this research suggested that effectiveness of information seeking behaviour of lawyers is significantly connected to the type of information needed, reasons for information seeking, sources in obtaining information, seeking strategies, and challenges in information seeking.

Keywords: Information seeking behaviour, legal information, lawyers, exploratory factor analysis

INTRODUCTION

Legal professionals need legal information for making sound decisions in all areas of the legal arena. The concept of information in a legal education was paramount to people in legal disciplines, such as law students, law tutors, researchers, lawyers, and judges. The term 'Information' may bring dissimilar meanings to divergent people. Information seeking behaviour is considered a multifarious dynamic, social human behaviour that needs a picture as rich as possible (Gureshi 2008, cited in Yusuf (2012). As been mentioned by Ikoja-Odongo and Mostert, (2006) indicates that the term has been explained, understood and differently interpreted across diverse areas, specialty, niches, careers and professions. This statement has been supported by Olorunfemi (2009), which views the perspective as people normally differently illuminate the belief of 'information'.

Ikoja-Odongo & Ocholla (2004), states that information seeking is the process involving a person about to search for information. Nkomo, Ocholla and Jacobs, (2011) recommends that information seeking behaviour depends on user study, library access, and time spent committed to seek for information by the user. Abu Bakar (2010) states that information seeking synonym with behaviour and effort disclosed by human beings in their information searching to satisfy miscellaneous needs of information. In legal world, as stated by Sanni and Tunmibi (2024), law is an information-based profession depends largely on timely and accurate information whilst judges and magistrates need information to make judicial decisions.

In Malaysia, seeking for information is crucial to the legal profession because of the numerous tasks performed

by lawyers. They are highly depending on accurate and timely information because of the tasks which would include advocacy, managerial, counseling, and administrative. Information need of lawyers is paramount because it helps to enable them set and achieve goals in order to adequate services to their clients, and ensure clients' satisfactions. Thus, this statement has reflected that information is crucial to the law career. As such, in order for them to be able to cope with the various tasks ahead, lawyers are expected to have relevant information access to various sources in carrying out their responsibilities or duties. In-line with the assertion by Makri et al. (2008), he expresses that information seeking is part of a lawyers' working environment.

Failure to study the information required by lawyers may result in undesirable things. For example, the reputation of lawyers could be tarnished if they unable to get accurate information in conducting a research on a case handled. Also, failure to investigate information needs by lawyers can cause them not to conduct court case studies and failed to solve any problems perfectly. A great extent of information and knowledge are highly incorporate in legal study (Ellis et al., 2014; Komlodi, 2002, 2004). Leckie et al., (1996), highlighted that professionals play many distinct roles which in turn "shape the type of information needed, the way in which it is retrieved and the ultimate use of that information". Professional's roles according to Leckie et al. (1996) consisting advocacy, drafting, counselling and managerial. Otiike (2000) explored the legal information needs of lawyers in Kenya. It was noted that a lawyer's work is determined by the legal needs of the clients, which, in turn, influences the information needs of the lawyer. Khan et al. (2011) reported that lawyers need information for case preparation and this is generally acquired from their district bar library.

Access to legal information is of upmost importance for effective justice (McClelland, 2009). Lawyers by profession, however, have received little attention from library researchers especially in Malaysia, and as a consequence their information-seeking behaviour are often assumed to resemble those of either undergraduate law students or postgraduate law students. A review of the literature indicates that past works investigating the legal information needs of lawyers are difficult to be located especially in Malaysia. The limited studies so far in the field of legal user studies are as well pertain to situations in the developed world, for instance in England in the United Kingdom. As indicated by Mohd Razilan, Tuan Safaat, Ahmad Zam and Ahmad Nazri (2024), little is known about the information needs and seeking behaviour of lawyers in Malaysia where this apparent gap suggests that exploratory research is critical to determine reasons, opinions, and motivations of lawyers and attempt to lay the groundwork that will lead to future studies. Finding of their study indicated significant insight on the dominancy of online sources usability to fulfil lawyers' information needs. Hence, this study is proposed to examine possible factors influencing the effectiveness of legal information needs and information seeking behaviour among lawyers with the posited dimensions of type of information, the reason, the sources, the seeking strategies and the challenges faced in satisfying their needs. The identified measures may lead to unveil its robust structure based around key factors associated with the effectiveness of lawyers information seeking behaviour.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The role of a lawyer varies significantly across legal jurisdictions and therefore can be treated here in only the most general terms defined in Black's Law Dictionary (Black & Garner, 2004). In general, as noted by Fowler (2007), lawyers work primarily in the legal culture, with its extensive rules and procedures requiring the right kind of legal information. Jamshed, Naeem & Bhatti (2020) shares their study findings on the usage of law libraries by lawyers which indicated that most of the lawyers prefer the advice of senior lawyers rather than visiting the law library. It also revealed that the lack of electronic resources and access to online databases are among the major problems associated with the law library. Lawyers operate in information intensive environment. Everything they do, whether providing legal advice, representing a client in court, or drafting a legal document requires information (Otiike and Mathews, 2000). Moreover, Anmol, Khan and Muhammad (2021) reported Jamshed (2020) claimed that majority of female lawyers sought information from printed material.

Professionals play many distinct roles where these roles result in distinct types of activities which in turn "shape the type of information needed, the way in which it is retrieved and the ultimate use of that information." (Leckie et al., 1996). These roles are as shown in Table 1. Anmol, Khan and Muhammad (2021) claimed that lawyers used multiple of information sources, visited different libraries and satisfied with the

accessible sources and services however, they ranked their own chamber libraries at top. Otike (1997) argued that the legal profession, just like the members of the general public, requires legal information. The scope of each practice determines the specificity of legal information needed for ready reference and research. Lawyers need to understand the law to enable them to perform the various challenges presented to them in life without worrying about going against.

Table 1: Professional's roles according to Leckie et al. (1996)

Roles	Descriptions
Advocacy	Persuading someone (usually a tribunal of some kind) what the law should be, what law should be applied or how the law should be applied.
Drafting	Preparing documents and correspondence.
Counselling	Helping and advising clients.
Managerial	Selecting and processing the firm's resources.

METHODS

Sample

This study used a questionnaire as the main instrument for the data collection, a six-part instrument have been used to collect data in this study. The questionnaire, constructed by researcher, were passed to lawyers who work in Klang Valley (KV) area. KV includes some areas in central Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya and its surroundings and suburbs only. Participants were drawn from a pool of lawyers consisting Associates, Senior Associates, and Partners from few legal firms located in Klang Valley. The copies of questionnaires were distributed to 200 lawyers, personally.

Measures

Dependent study variable

Effectiveness of the information seeking behaviour, the dependent variable, is measured using the six items, as shown in Table 2, based on the works of Leckie, Pettigrew & Sylvain (1996) and Kuhlthau (1991). Each of the item is rated with scale from 1 to 5. All the mean values are above 3 indicating towards positive agreement of mentioned items.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of six items of the effectiveness of information seeking

Item	Mean	SD
1. I am able to obtain legal information within a time as I know what I need.	4.04	0.846
2. I am able to seek for the right legal information as I know the reason of what I am searching.	3.84	0.707
3. I am able to retrieve legal information in minimum hours as I know the sources that I should refer to.	3.80	0.726
4. I can perform legal information seeking very well because I have a good seeking strategy.	3.58	0.802
5. I can obtain legal information easily because everything is on a finger tips.	3.18	0.959
6. I can successfully obtain legal information as I am able to overcome the barriers	3.15	0.891

Independent study variables

Authors collected the data of the study variables of type of legal information, reason for seeking legal information, sources of legal information, seeking strategies and Challenges; by assessing to what extent the respondents agree with the items that reflect to their type of legal information needed. The respective items were rated from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Some of the items' summary statistics are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of the study independent variables

Items	Mean	SD
I am seeking for decision of superior courts of record to prepare correspondence	3.96	1.002
I am seeking for relevant legal papers for drafting and prepare documents	4.41	0.729
I am looking for legal information for workshop presentation	3.07	1.244
I am searching for legal information to improve my personal knowledge	3.13	1.359
I am doing online databases searching to obtain legal information	4.72	0.540
I am searching for legal information by meeting colleagues and seniors	3.97	0.810
I am doing online databases searching (e.g. LexisNexis) to obtain legal information	4.32	0.765
I am searching for legal information through discussion with peers, colleagues and seniors	3.88	0.816
I have a limited time to prepare my research work or drafting	3.90	1.020
I have limited collections and reference materials in my law library	3.38	1.364

Note: Full items are available upon request from the main author.

Data Analysis

A pilot study was conducted in order to develop, adapt, and check the feasibility of techniques, to determine the reliability of measures, and/or to calculate how big the final sample needs to be. In this pilot study, researcher distributed twenty (20) questionnaires to selected lawyers to see whether the questions could be used for total population. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to examine the factor structure of the model study. EFA is often applied when studying relatively untested measures, whether because they are newly created or recently adapted (Goretzko et al., 2021). To achieve the study objective, EFA is performed on the basis of the standard EFA practices in social science domain via SPSS Version 20.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Respondents Profiles

Out of a total of 200 questionnaires distributed, the authors received 182 responses where leads to a response rate of 91%. Thus, from 182 respondents, it consists of female and male lawyers of age varying from 22 to 45 years. This section describes demographic profiles of 182 respondents consisting lawyers from various firms in Klang Valley. Table 4 summarizes the preliminary profiling results of the respondents. The total of female respondents is as much as double the male respondents. It also exhibits that majority of lawyers (46.7%) participated in the survey is coming from the youngest age category i.e. between 22 and 27 years, followed by 37.9% of lawyers aged between 28 and 33 years of category. Clearly it indicates the participation of lawyers is majority from younger generation in Klang Valley (>80%) as it is skewed to age 33 years and less.

Furthermore, almost three quarter of them had been in service of less than five years. The rest of the results are as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents' profiles

Profile	Total	%
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	124	68.1
Male	58	31.9
<i>Age category</i>		
22 - 27 years	85	46.7
28 - 33 years	69	37.9
34 - 39 years	14	7.7
40 - 45 years	8	4.4
> 45 years	6	3.3
<i>Education level</i>		
Bachelors		74.7
Masters		25.3
<i>Job position</i>		
Associate		63.7
Senior Associate		22.0
Partner		14.3
<i>Years of practice</i>		
Less than 5 years		71.4
5 years up to 10 years		15.4
10 years up to 15 years		7.7
15 years and above		5.5

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted in order to reduce the items into a manageable number before further analysis can be carried out. In factor analysis procedure, items which have similar characters would be grouped together under one component. Due to its data driven nature, EFA is believed to be appropriate at identifying a set of indicators that adequately represent common constructs and examining

relationships with regards on the association of indicators to their posited construct, known as factor loadings (Howard, (2023), Howard & Henderson, (2023), Howard & O’Sullivan, (2024)).

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test was performed to measure sampling adequacy for each variable in the model and for the complete model in specific, it measures the proportion of variance among variables that possessing common variance which can be grouped into its own group. The result showed significant results of KMO and Bartlett's test of sphericity, where KMO value was 0.773 ($\chi^2 = 1959.88$, $p < 0.001$). Hence, supporting the rationale of using EFA for the study sample. Using Kaiser criterion in determining the number of components, all factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 are used. Results indicated that the first five components have an eigenvalue greater than 1 (ranging from 1.66 to 6.22). The total variance explained of the five components shows the cumulative loadings of 61.26% (Table 5). This was also confirmed by the scree plot suggesting the number of components of five. Moreover, the factor rotation is performed to further guide in choosing the correct number of factors using varimax rotation with Kaiser normalization, and is the most popular orthogonal rotation across many fields of study (Ledesma et al., 2021). The varimax rotation increases the variance in factor loadings where a greater dispersion between large and small factor loadings is produced (Howard, 2023). Results in Table 6 show that five items do not meet the criteria, i.e. by considering threshold of dropping measures with factor loadings with cut-offs < 0.55 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The measurement items to be dropped are B2, C4, D2, F1 and F4.

Table 5: Total variance explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cum. %	Total	% of Variance	Cum.%
1	6.224	24.896	24.896	6.224	24.896	24.896
2	2.874	11.495	36.391	2.874	11.495	36.391
3	2.606	10.423	46.814	2.606	10.423	46.814
4	1.951	7.803	54.617	1.951	7.803	54.617
5	1.662	6.647	61.263	1.662	6.647	61.263

Table 6: Factor loadings for effectiveness of information seeking behavior components

Item	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
B1	.787				
B2	.465				
B3	.620				
B4	.557				
B5	.659				
C1		-.638			
C2		.810			

C3		.688			
C4		.425			
C5		.750			
D1			-.551		
D2			.376		
D3			.758		
D4			.893		
D5			.765		
E1					.690
E2					.724
E3					.716
E4					.750
E5					.712
F1				-.528	
F2				.602	
F3				.617	
F4				.473	
F5				.667	
<i>Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis</i>					
<i>Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization</i>					

Reliability Analysis

Internal consistency reliability after performing EFA is as presented in Table 7. It shows that the lowest for *sources* (0.616) and the highest is for *seeking strategies* (0.818). According to all of the values, all variables were >0.60 value of the Cronbach's Alpha which indicated that all of the instruments applied in this study were acceptable.

Table 7: Internal reliability

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Type of information	4	0.75
Reasons	4	0.68

Sources	4	0.67
Seeking Strategies	5	0.82
Challenges	3	0.65

Summary statistics and Correlation analysis

In Table 8, the results of summary statistics and correlation analysis are presented. The correlation between dimensions of the effectiveness of legal information seeking behaviour and identified components through EFA ($n=182$). Apart from having significant positive relationships with among the components, the *reason* and *seeking strategies* are having significant negative correlation with *challenges*. Early assumption is that although all of the posited independent variables are significantly correlated with the dependent but the level of magnitude is not that strong.

Table 8: Descriptive statistics and correlations coefficients ($n=182$)

	Mean	SD	Skew	Kurtosis	Correlation					
					B	C	D	E	F	Effectiveness
B: Type	3.888	0.645	-0.319	-0.458	-	0.374**	0.300**	0.362**	0.257**	0.183*
C: Reason	3.165	0.956	0.152	-0.947		-	0.119	0.379**	-0.370**	0.013*
D: Sources	3.831	0.560	-0.158	-0.172			-	0.351**	0.154*	0.221**
E: Seeking strategies	3.704	0.593	-0.232	0.037				-	-0.059*	0.142*
F: Challenges	3.226	0.971	0.000	-1.053					-	0.170*
Effectiveness	3.598	0.551	0.096	0.280						-

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

DISCUSSION

Empirical evidence via statistical adequacy of the exploratory factor analysis employed in this study is supported by a good KMO, Bartlett and acceptable internal consistency reliability of Cronbach alpha coefficients (all > 0.600). In addition, the total explained variance was higher than 50%. Thus, all of the above indicates that the model is statistically robust (Marsh, Guo, Dicke, Parker and Craven, 2020).

With regards to measures identified in the exploratory factor analysis employed in the study, a parallel finding is obtained as what has been highlighted by Leckie et al. (1996). Lawyers normally need for information based on their roles and duties. This could be explained as different type of activities and roles would turn into shape to the type of information needed. As the findings showed that lawyers were seeking for relevant legal papers to carry out their roles on drafting which aimed to prepare documents and correspondences, this could illustrate the relationship between one another. It is also claimed by Otikey's (1997) where his finding mentioned that the scope of lawyer's practice determines the specificity of legal information needed for ready

reference. Hence, this concept has proved that types of legal information need would cause changes in information seeking behavior of lawyers.

Lawyers seeking information to solve legal cases, the result is similar to those reported in past studies (Bronstein & Solomon, 2021; Khan et al., 2011; Kidd, 1978). The notion of lawyers, for instance, solicitors, were seeking for information in order to assist in solving legal cases and in order to keep abreast of the law, and "acquiring and applying legal know-how" (Kidd 1978). Bronstein & Solomon (2021) reported that information assimilation, networking and self-promotion and content creation that encompass a wide variety of information practices related to seeking information related to a case, preparing and presenting a case. Hence, relying on the finding also proved that a lawyer would seek for information to determine what law was applied on a particular problem, or, how the court would act if the problem before it was ever litigated in preparing for the legal action (Cohen, 1969). Thus, it was anticipated that information needs are greatly influenced by the nature of the work that lawyers do. The lawyers' need for information, in turn, influences their information seeking behavior. The needs may determine where lawyers go for information, what materials they use, and how the information was obtained.

CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to develop a scale for measuring the effectiveness of information needs and information seeking of lawyers through exploratory factor analysis. Exploratory factor analysis allowed identification of a structure composed of five clearly differentiated factors. This finding should be interpreted as a process that synthesizes effectively groups of components of impacting the effectiveness of information seeking among lawyers.

As with many studies, the current study has limitation. The sample of lawyers covered only from Klang Valley, i.e. the heart of Malaysia's urban area and industrial development. State's political mileage and policy might contribute in influencing lawyers' information seeking activities, decision making, surroundings and so forth. Hence the study might not present a fuller picture of the information seeking behaviour of lawyers in totality. For future research authors warrant to test the sensitivity and specificity of the scale. In the other facet of research, current issues with respect to factor retention method is being debated on the use of Kaiser criterion and the scree test. As claimed by (Goretzko, 2022), these approaches would lead to poor performance in simulation studies but their popularity still appears to be unmatched by more sophisticated approaches such as ML-based factor forest (Goretzko & Bühner, 2020) and the network-based EGA (Golino et al., 2020). Since it is beyond the focus of the study, the authors would adhere firmly to the heuristics approach.

The results provide preliminary support for the adaptation and validation on the effectiveness of information seeking behavior of lawyers in Malaysia by considering the posited measures produced by EFA. Findings of study reveal the five-factor solution where the scale can be used for further research as a measure and would serve as an initiation process for model building on examining the factors influencing the effectiveness of information seeking behavior of lawyers in Malaysia.

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