# Assessing the Information Needs and Seeking Behavior of Women Faculty Members in PU Colleges of Kalaburagi District, Karnataka: A Gendered Perspective

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## ARTICLE INFO

## ABSTRACT

This study explores the information needs and seeking behaviors of women faculty members working in pre-university (PU) colleges in the Kalaburagi district of Karnataka, India. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the research investigates the primary sources of information, satisfaction levels with library services, and the impact of socio-demographic factors on information-seeking behaviors. The study reveals significant disparities in access to and use of digital resources, influenced by factors such as age, marital status, and educational background. The findings highlight the critical need for enhanced library services, tailored training programs, and policy interventions to support women faculty in their academic and research activities. These insights contribute to the broader discourse on gender and technology in educational settings, emphasizing the importance of equitable information access in promoting gender equality in STEM fields.

## Introduction

### Background and Significance

Information is a pivotal resource for national development, fostering knowledge creation, innovation, and an informed citizenry. Libraries play a crucial role in fulfilling the information needs of society by developing collections and services tailored to user requirements. Understanding the information-seeking behavior of library users is essential for libraries to align their services with user needs effectively. This study focuses on the information needs and seeking behavior of women faculty members in PU colleges in Kalaburagi, Karnataka, providing insights into their challenges and requirements in an academic setting.

The study on assessing the information needs and seeking behavior of women faculty members in PU colleges of Kalaburagi District, Karnataka, is crucial for understanding how these educators access and utilize information resources. Research on information-seeking behavior among various groups, such as newspaper journalists (Mukarambi, P., & Kohinoor, V. 2022), college students (Gabriela, F. 2023), and university library users (GH, H. K., & Jagannath, U. 2019), highlights the

significance of identifying information needs, preferred channels, and satisfaction levels. By investigating the awareness of information literacy (Sharad, A. T., 2022) and the use of libraries, this study can provide insights into enhancing library services and educational support for women faculty members. Additionally, exploring factors influencing information-seeking behavior, such as access constraints and search strategies (Gabriela, F. 2023), can contribute to designing tailored information programs for this specific group within the educational landscape of Kalaburagi District, Karnataka.

## Objectives

1. To study the information-seeking behavior patterns of women faculty members in PU colleges of Kalaburagi.
2. To analyze the primary sources of information utilized by these faculty members.
3. To examine satisfaction levels with library collections and services.
4. To identify various channels of information used during the information-seeking process.
5. To assess the dependence on digital resources for teaching and research.

## Literature Review

### Information-Seeking Behavior

Previous studies have extensively explored the information-seeking behavior of various user groups, including academics, scientists, and students. Key factors influencing this behavior include the purpose of information, user skills, preferred channels and sources, and barriers to information access. The digital revolution has significantly impacted information-seeking practices, with a growing reliance on electronic resources and digital libraries.

The information-seeking behavior of women faculty members is a crucial area of study, as highlighted in various research papers. Studies in Maharashtra reveal that postgraduate students and research scholars predominantly utilize e-resources to update their knowledge (Sharad, A. T. 2022). In Bangladesh, faculty members rely on Google Scholar and ResearchGate for information searches, emphasizing the importance of determining source quality and credibility (Habiba, U., & Islam, M. E. 2022). Meanwhile, research in Iran indicates that faculty members face obstacles such as low internet speed and lack

of time when seeking information online, with a significant relationship observed between age and social network usage (Rostami, C., Hosseini, E., & Saberi, M. K. 2021). Additionally, a study in India focuses on information literacy among women teaching faculty members, highlighting the need for awareness of information access techniques and tools to enhance productivity. These findings collectively underscore the significance of understanding and addressing the information needs and seeking behavior of women faculty members to support their academic and research endeavors.

The information needs and seeking behavior of women faculty members have been studied in various academic settings. Research conducted in institutions like Coimbatore, Erode, Tripur, Nilgiris, and at Mother Teresa Women's University and its affiliated colleges revealed that women teaching faculty members rely increasingly on electronic resources and e-resources to support their academic activities, showcasing a shift towards digital information sources (Azadeh, F., & Ghasemi, S. 2015). Factors affecting information-seeking behavior include insufficient computer labs, unstable power supply, outdated ICT infrastructure, limited funds for e-database subscriptions, and lack of information-searching skills [2]. Additionally, the study on women's information-seeking behavior for fashion needs highlighted the correlation between media use intensity and information-seeking behavior in the context of fashion (Amanda, C., Prijana, P., & Yanto, A. 2017). Understanding the information literacy needs and competencies of women faculty members is crucial for enhancing their productivity and academic success, emphasizing the importance of tailored information access techniques and tools (Azadeh, F., & Ghasemi, S. 2015). Abdullahi, A. O., Igbinovia, M. O., & Esther, S. O. (2015) examined the information needs and seeking behavior of undergraduates in the University of Ilorin, Nigeria, using a simple random sampling technique to sample twenty (20) respondents each from the twelve (12) faculties in the university. Women faculty members determine their information needs through various factors such as designation, age, experience, and preferred sources of information. Studies conducted at different institutions like Mother Teresa Women's University, Rehabilitation Faculty of Shahid Beheshti Medical University, and BPS Women University reveal that women faculty predominantly rely on sources like the internet, print resources, Google, ScienceDirect, and PubMed to fulfill their information needs (Laleh, J., Mehdi, T. S., & Khosro, K. K. 2014). Factors like age groups, teaching experience, research experience, and the frequency of library visits also play a crucial role in

shaping their information-seeking behavior. Additionally, challenges like low-speed internet and the unavailability of information pose significant obstacles in accessing the required information (Kumar, P. 2013). Understanding these determinants can help in developing tailored information literacy programs to enhance the productivity of women faculty members in academic and research environments (Khan, G., & Bhatti, R. 2012).

## Gender and Information Access

Gender plays a critical role in information access and utilization. Studies have shown that women often face unique challenges in accessing information due to socio-cultural, economic, and institutional barriers. In the context of academic settings, women faculty members may encounter additional hurdles related to workload, family responsibilities, and limited access to professional networks.

In academic settings, women faculty members face unique challenges in accessing and utilizing information due to socio-cultural, economic, and institutional barriers. Socio-cultural factors, such as traditional gender roles and implicit biases, can limit their time for research and undervalue their contributions. Economic constraints and unequal access to technology further hinder their ability to engage in professional development. Institutional barriers, including heavier workloads and limited access to professional networks, restrict their opportunities for career advancement. Balancing family responsibilities adds to these challenges, especially for those from marginalized groups who face compounded barriers. Addressing these issues requires promoting gender equity through inclusive policies, equitable resource distribution, and supportive institutional cultures.

## Research Methodology

### Design and Sampling

A mixed-methods approach was adopted, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews to gain a comprehensive understanding of the information needs and seeking behaviors of women faculty members. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select participants from various PU colleges in Kalaburagi.

### Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and in-depth interviews. The questionnaire covered aspects such as information sources, library usage, satisfaction with services, and demographic information. Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS, employing techniques such as frequency distribution, chi-square tests, and correlation analysis.

## Participants

The study included 434 women faculty members from different PU colleges in Kalaburagi. The participants were selected to ensure a diverse representation of age, marital status, and educational background.

## Data Analysis and Visualization

Table 1 illustrates the age distribution of respondents. The largest group is between 25 and 35 years, making up 47.0% of the respondents, followed by those between 35 and 45 years (18.4%). Respondents under 25 and those between 45 and 55 years are almost equal, constituting 15.9% and 15.2%, respectively. The smallest group is those over 55 years, representing only 3.5%. The clear visual representation shows a predominant concentration of respondents in the 25 to 35 age group.

**Table 1:** *Age Distribution of Respondents*

| Age Group | Frequency | Percentage |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Less than 25 years | 69 | 15.9% |
| Between 25 to 35 years | 204 | 47.0% |
| Between 35 to 45 years | 80 | 18.4% |
| Between 45 to 55 years | 66 | 15.2% |
| More than 55 years | 15 | 3.5% |

## Information Sources and Usage

**Table 2:** *Usage Frequency of Documentary Sources*

Table 2 highlights the frequency of use for various documentary sources. Books are the most frequently used source, with 84.8% of respondents using them very often. Journals follow, with 48.6% using them very often. Other documents have a notable split, with 50% never using them and 50% using them very often. Reports and theses/dissertations are less frequently used compared to other sources. This chart effectively highlights the reliance on books and journals while showing significant variability in the use of other document types.

| Documentary Source | Very Often (%) | Often (%) | Sometimes (%) | Less Often (%) | Never (%) | Mean Score | Standard Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Books | 84.8 | 10.0 | 5.2 | - | - | 4.80 | 0.51 |
| Journals | 48.6 | 25.6 | 16.1 | 1.4 | 8.3 | 4.07 | 1.11 |
| Magazines | 36.9 | 28.0 | 23.1 | 1.4 | 10.5 | 3.79 | 1.22 |
| Newspapers | 32.2 | 44.2 | 7.9 | 4.0 | 11.7 | 3.82 | 1.31 |
| Theses and Dissertations | 26.6 | 22.0 | 20.3 | 6.7 | 24.4 | 3.21 | 1.52 |
| Reports | 14.2 | 32.9 | 17.3 | 20.1 | 15.6 | 3.00 | 1.32 |
| Government Publications | 24.3 | 22.0 | 23.2 | 13.2 | 17.3 | 3.23 | 1.44 |
| Reference Sources | 30.7 | 29.3 | 17.0 | 6.6 | 16.3 | 3.51 | 1.44 |
| Other Documents | 50.0 | - | - | - | 50.0 | 1.64 | 1.22 |
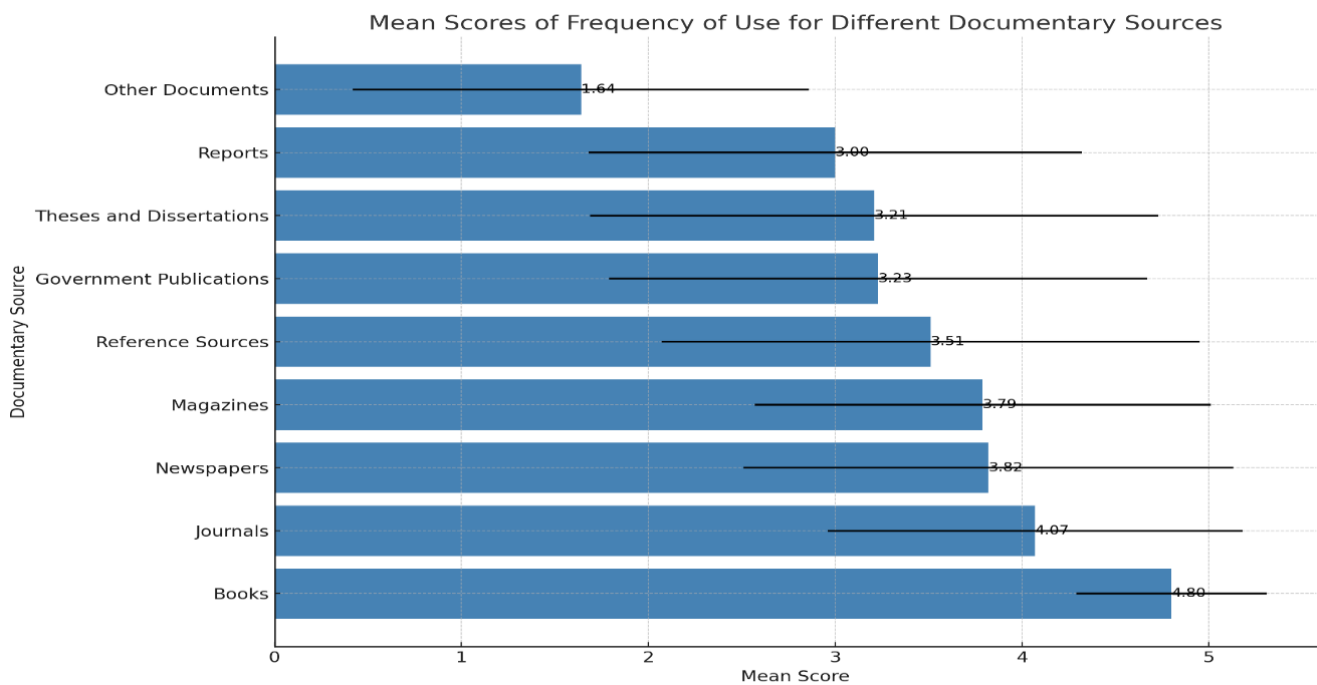


**Fig. 1:** *Mean Scores of Frequencies of Use for Different Documentary Sources*

The mean scores indicate the average frequency of use for different documentary sources. Books have the highest mean score (4.80), signifying that they are used most frequently, followed by journals (4.07). Newspapers and magazines have moderate mean scores of 3.82 and 3.79, respectively. Theses and dissertations, reports, and government publications have lower mean scores, around 3.00–3.23, indicating less frequent usage. Other documents have the lowest mean score (1.64), showing that they are seldom used. The standard deviations highlight variability in usage, with theses and dissertations having the highest variability (1.52), suggesting diverse usage patterns among respondents.

## Satisfaction with Library Services

The enhanced stacked bar chart with data labels clearly shows satisfaction levels for various library attributes. "Access to Digital Resources" leads with 20% "Very Satisfied," while "Availability of Resources" has the highest "Neutral" at 40%. "Staff Assistance" shows notable dissatisfaction (20% combined). The data labels emphasize the prevalence of neutral and satisfied responses. The mean scores and standard deviations indicate moderate satisfaction with some variability. Focusing on improving resource availability and staff assistance can potentially increase overall satisfaction levels.

**Table 3:** *Library Attributes Satisfaction Levels*

| Library Attribute | Very Satisfied (%) | Satisfied (%) | Neutral (%) | Dissatisfied (%) | Very Dissatisfied (%) | Mean Score | Standard Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Availability of Resources | 10 | 30 | 40 | 15 | 5 | 3.25 | 1.05 |
| Access to Digital Resources | 20 | 25 | 35 | 15 | 5 | 3.40 | 1.15 |
| Staff Assistance | 15 | 30 | 35 | 10 | 10 | 3.30 | 1.18 |
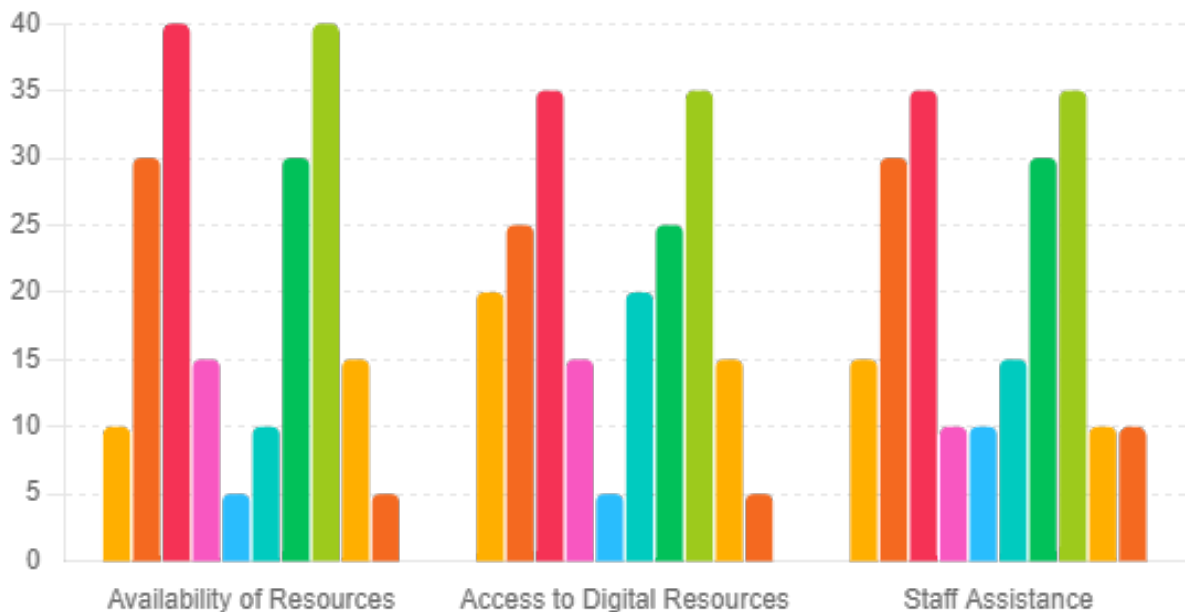


**Fig. 2:** *Library Attributes Satisfaction Levels*

**Table 4:** *Influence of Age on Digital Resource Usage*

| Age Group | High Usage (%) | Medium Usage (%) | Low Usage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Less than 25 years | 80 | 15 | 5 |
| Between 25 to 35 years | 60 | 30 | 10 |
| Between 35 to 45 years | 30 | 50 | 20 |
| Between 45 to 55 years | 20 | 40 | 40 |
| More than 55 years | 10 | 30 | 60 |

## Impact of Socio-Demographic Factors

Table 4 illustrates the influence of age on digital resource usage across five age groups. Younger age groups exhibit higher usage, with 80% of those under 25 and 60% of those aged 25 to 35 showing high usage. Usage decreases significantly with age, dropping to 10% for those over 55. Conversely, low usage increases with age, reaching 60% in the oldest group. Medium usage peaks in the 35 to 45 age group at 50%. The trend indicates a clear decline in high usage and a rise in low usage as age increases.

Figure 3 illustrates the trend of digital resource usage across different age groups. High usage decreases sharply with age, from 80% in the youngest group to 10% in the oldest. Medium usage shows a peak in the 35 to 45 years group at 50%, and low usage rises significantly with age, from 5% in the youngest group to 60% in the oldest. This visualization highlights the inverse relationship between age and high digital resource usage and a direct relationship between age and low usage.
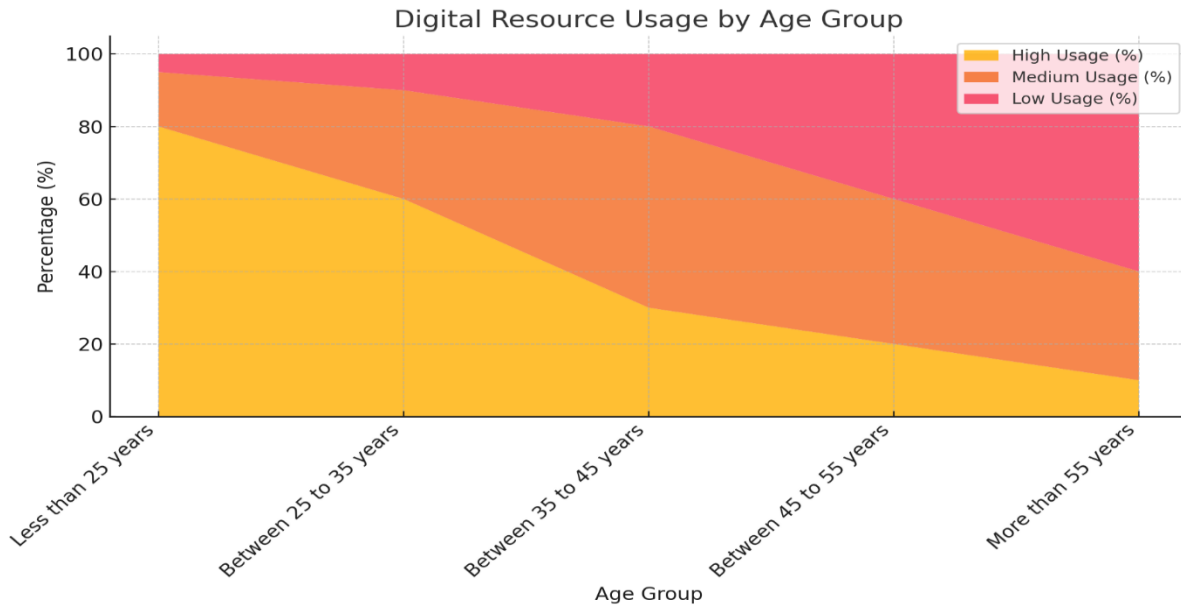
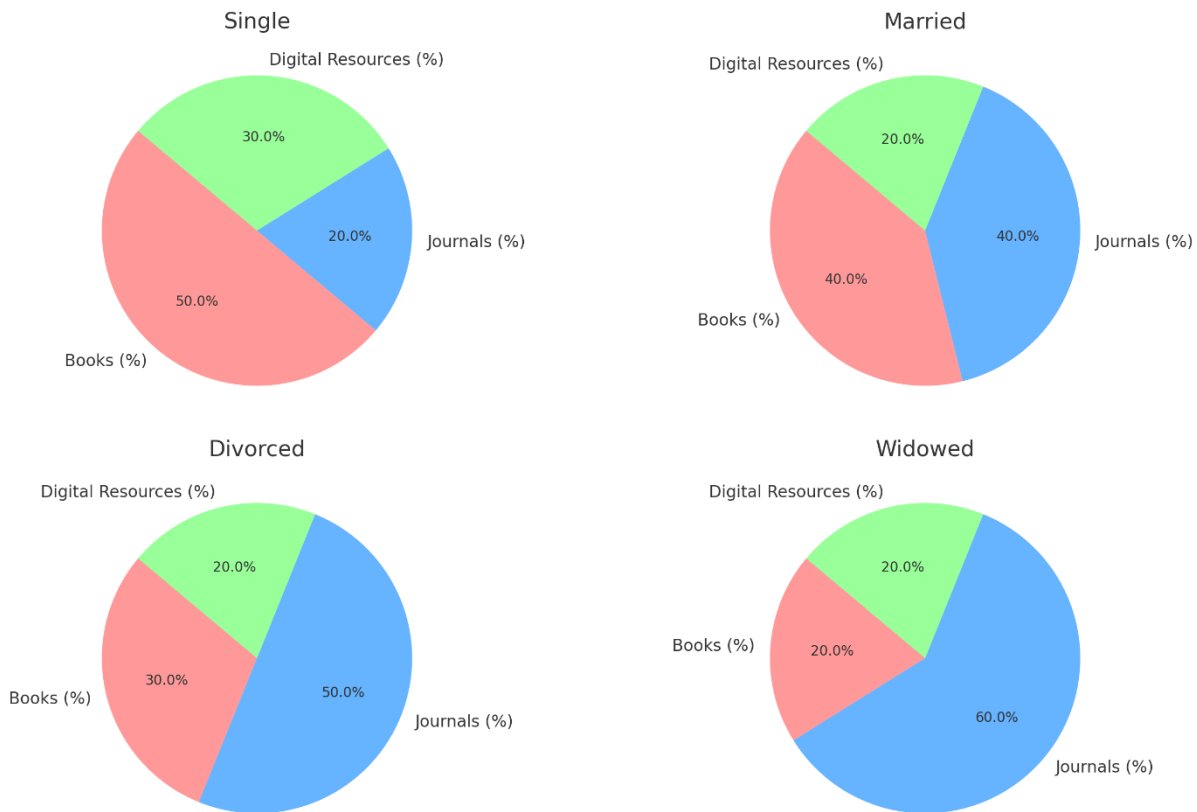**Fig. 3:** Trend of Digital Resource Usage Across Different Age Groups



**Fig. 5:** Impact of Marital Status on Information-Seeking Channels

Figure 5 pie charts display the distribution of information-seeking channels across different marital statuses. Single individuals primarily use books (50%), followed by digital resources (30%) and journals (20%). Married individuals have an equal preference for books and journals (40% each), with digital resources (20%) being less used.

Divorced individuals show a higher inclination toward journals (50%) compared to books (30%) and digital resources (20%). Widowed individuals predominantly use journals (60%), with books (20%) and digital resources (20%) being less favored. This visualization highlights the varying preferences in information channels based on marital status.

# Findings

## Information Sources and Usage

The study found that women faculty members primarily rely on books and journals for their information needs. Digital resources are also used, but to a lesser extent, particularly among older faculty members.

## Satisfaction with Library Services

Overall satisfaction with library services was found to be moderate. Key areas of dissatisfaction included the inadequacy of digital resources, limited access to updated collections, and insufficient training on using digital tools.

## Impact of Socio-Demographic Factors

Age, marital status, and educational background were found to influence information-seeking behavior significantly. Younger, unmarried, and highly educated faculty members were more likely to utilize digital resources and express higher levels of satisfaction with library services.

# Recommendations

## Enhancing Library Services

Update library collections regularly to include the latest digital and print resources.

Improve access to digital resources through better infrastructure and training programs.

Foster a user-centric service design to cater to the specific needs of women faculty members.

Conduct workshops and seminars to raise awareness of available resources and their applications.

Develop user guides and tutorials to help faculty navigate and utilize the library's offerings effectively.

Organize regular networking events to facilitate knowledge exchange and collaboration among women faculty members.

Establish a dedicated team of librarians specialized in various disciplines to provide expert guidance.

Host public lectures, panel discussions, and other events to foster a sense of community and promote lifelong learning.

# Faculty Development

Conduct workshops on information literacy and the use of digital resources.

Create a supportive environment for information-seeking activities by reducing workload and providing adequate research support.

Create platforms for faculty members to share their research and collaborate on projects.

Offer modified research consultations and support services to address the specific research needs of women faculty members.

Foster a library environment that is safe and respectful for all users.

Implement clear policies against harassment and discrimination, and ensure they are communicated and enforced effectively.

Establish formal mentorship programs that pair junior faculty with experienced colleagues for guidance and support.

Encourage peer mentoring and collaborative learning among faculty members.

Offer training in areas such as strategic planning, conflict resolution, and team management.

# Policy Interventions

- Develop policies to ensure equitable access to information resources for all faculty members.
- Provide resources and support that address the unique challenges faced by women in academia.
- Invest in digital infrastructure and professional development to support the evolving information needs of faculty members.
- Create family-friendly library policies, such as providing spaces for nursing mothers and family-friendly study areas.

Offer flexible hours and remote access options to accommodate the needs of faculty members with caregiving responsibilities.

# Conclusion

This study highlights the necessity for targeted interventions to support women faculty in PU colleges. Enhancing library services, such as improving access to digital resources and diversifying collections, along with offering tailored training programs in professional development and technology, can significantly aid women faculty. Additionally, implementing supportive policies that ensure equitable workloads, family-friendly practices, and inclusive environments is crucial. These measures promote gender equality and foster a more inclusive academic setting, thereby advancing women's participation in STEM fields and ensuring they have the necessary resources and institutional support.

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