Information Seeking Behaviour Model of Senior High School Students

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Abstract

School libraries are a means for students to meet their information needs. Students of Senior High School (henceforth SHS) require information to support their personal, study, and environmental needs. To meet those needs, SMA students do information seeking through information channels. This research was aimed to identify an information seeking model of SMA students in Surabaya. The research employed a descriptive-quantitative approach. The sample of the research was SHS students in Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia, that were chosen using the multistage random sampling. Data collection was conducted using questionnaires. The research found that the students' information needs were mostly concerning entertainment and further education (after high school). The students responded to these needs calmly. Psychological, demographic, role-related, and environmental factors, as well as the characteristics of the information sources influenced information seeking. In addition, teacher's recommendation for using information channels also led SHS students to prefer to use the Internet. The majority of the respondents sought information when they needed it, but they kept looking for details to complete the required information.

Keywords: information needs, information seeking behaviour, school library, high school students

1. Introduction

School libraries as a supporting facility of teaching-learning processes play an important role in meeting users' information needs, including those of students. School library is part of education activities. This is stipulated in Law No. 43/2007 on Library that states that every school must have a library. Library is vital and strategic to the development of science and technology. Therefore, library should proactively catch up with recent information and should attempt to provide relevant information.

People require information as their primary need in playing their roles. This need in turn becomes a motive of information seeking efforts. Previous research found that SHS students in Surabaya preferred other information sources to library (Harsanty, 2009). This indicates that Surabaya SHS students' information needs can be met by information channels other than school library. To identify the overall information seeking behaviour of Surabaya SHS students, it is important to identify the model of the behaviour. Specifically, it is important to find out what the students will do when they need information, how to overcome it, and what they will do when faced with obstacles in utilizing school library.

2. Methods

This research used a quantitative approach. The quantitative approach used was descriptive in nature. The site of this research was senior high schools (SHSs) in Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia because it is the second largest city in Indonesia. It was assumed that in this city, the access to information was widely open. The research employed a multistage random sampling method.

The quantity of sample members is often expressed as the sample size (Sugiyono, 2002:79). According to Seymor Sudman (in Aaker, 1995:393), "the sample should be large enough so that when it is divided into groups, each group will have a minimum sample size of 100 or more." Hence, the research population was considered homogenous or one group only, so that the sample size was 200 people.

Data collection techniques used in this research were: a) Collection of primary data, that is, data collected by the authors through questionnaires; b) collection of secondary data, that is, data that were collected and processed by the third party, such as senior high schools and the data of students on websites, brochures, and other publications that were used for the sake of general description and qualitative analysis. After data were collected, they were processed.

3. Literature Review

When seeking information, individuals can interact with the manual information systems (such as newspapers or libraries), or with the computer-based systems (such as the world wide web) (Wilson, 2000). An individual's information seeking behaviour is usually related with one's information needs.

Information seeking behaviour, according to Feinman, is activities displayed by individuals in satisfying their information needs (Bystrom, 1999). The following is an information seeking behaviour model:
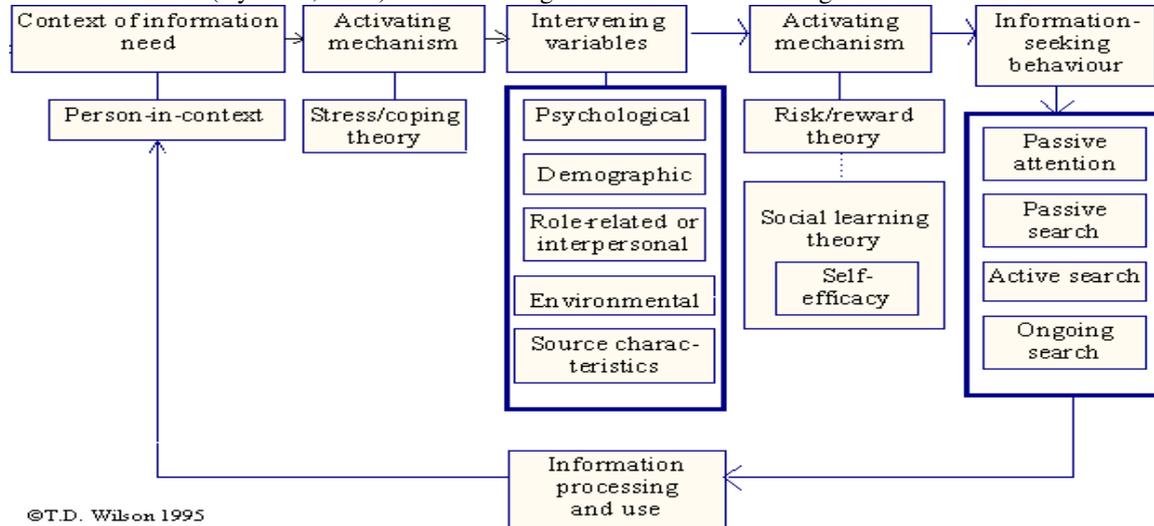

Figure 6: A revised general model of information behaviour

Figure: *Human Information Behaviour Model* (Wilson, 2000)

According to Wilson, human information needs are divided into three contexts, namely those related with individual characteristics, social roles, and the person's environment (1981).

Information needs related with individual characteristics are closely linked with satisfying the physiological, affective, and cognitive factors. Physiological needs include the needs for food, drinks, shelter, and so forth. Affective needs, according Katz, Grevitch and Haz are the needs for aesthetic reinforcement, pleasures, and emotional experiences (Yusup, 1995). Escapist needs are also included in affective need, that is, the need to escape, release tension, and desire for entertainment or diversion (Yusup, 1995). These affective needs are often called emotional or psychological needs, such as the needs for security, achievement, power, and so on. Cognitive needs include the needs for planning, mastering new skills, and so on (Wilson, 1981).

Although human personal needs are the motive of information seeking behaviour, this needs are sometimes triggered by an individual's roles in social life such as a set of activities, individual responsibility, and so on. The context of information needs is related with social roles and role theory. The theory introduced by Biddle and Thomas states that each individual tends to adjust their information seeking with the social context within a social system (Prabha, 2007).

Another need is related with a person's environment. This need is closely linked with a person's motive to strengthen or increase information, knowledge, and understanding of their environment (Yusup, 1995). The environment plays a big role in shaping individuals' behaviour. Wilson argues that individuals need information to catch up with the progress of their environment. This is part of human needs for a cognitive element, namely "the need to find order and meaning in the environment" (Eeva-Liisa: 1998).

The Wilson's model above illustrates people that are surrounded by information seeking contexts. Decision to seek information is triggered by motivation and need to solve a problem in which information is needed. Individuals should solve a number of obstacles to retrieve information. One should be in a "favourable" situation and have the proper ability to make a final decision to seek information. This model describes four types of information seeking:

1. Passive attention behaviour

   Information seeking with passive attention is also called unintentional information seeking, yet it allows for information to be absorbed, such as by listening to radio programs or watching television.

2. Passive search behaviour

   The term passive search may sound contradictory, but this really can happen when individuals feel that when they are unintentionally doing one type of seeking, the search is unexpectedly relevant with their needs.

3. Active search behaviour

   Active search is commonly conducted by individuals with information needs.

4. Ongoing search

Ongoing search is only possible when active seeking has become a basic framework, believe, value, and so on.

The process in the model has explained how human information seeking behaviour takes place. Now we understand how a situation emerges and brings about a motive to behave. Certainly the behaviour is within some problematic situations as understood by individuals. When stress has been overcome with the need for coping, individuals then display information seeking behaviour. But when that behaviour is about to be displayed, conflicts come into sight, whether those of cognitive, psychological, or physical. In other words, individuals will experience/be involved in new situations (in a new environment) when behave, and these situations will be regarded as additional motivation or obstacles.

When somebody is attempting to satisfy information needs through information seeking behaviour, there are a number of factors influencing the information seeking. Wilson (2000) identifies several factors influencing human information behaviour, such as:

1. Cognitive and psychological
   This factor consists of:
   a. Cognitive dissonance
      This disorder is related with individual's motivation in behaving. This concept asserts that the conflicting cognition makes individuals feel uncomfortable, thus they will attempt to solve the conflict with one or a number of solutions (Festinger in Faber, et.al., 2006). Cognitive dissonance occurs when one is faced with two or more equally good options while at the same time should decide on a single option but he or she is unsure about this option (Yusup, 2007). One way to overcome this cognitive dissonance is by continuously looking for information that can maintain and enhance existing knowledge, values, and beliefs.
   b. Selective exposure
      Interest is understood as attraction to an idea/information that is in harmony with someone's interests, needs, and attitudes. Rogers maintains that individuals tend to be open to ideas that are in harmony with their interests, needs, and attitudes. Aware or not, human often avoids messages that contradict their views and principles (Faber, et.al., 2006).
   c. Emotional characteristics
      This obstacle is related with individuals' emotional and mental state when seeking information. Emotional factor is also related with mood when seeking information.
2. Demographic factors
   These factors contain:
   a. Educational level and basic knowledge
      This factor is related with educational and knowledge levels of SHS students in seeking information. The effects of individuals' basic knowledge has been the question of consumer behaviour research. Another form of basic knowledge is foreign language mastery.
   b. Demographic variables
      Hargittai and Hinnant (2006) encourage information seeking behaviour researchers to identify social attributes of the group under investigation (the demographic characteristics and socioeconomic status), because these factors may affect the methods they use to find information. The economic circumstances are also a demographic variable. The economic issues related with information seeking behaviour are divided into two categories, namely: direct economic costs and the value of time.
3. Role related/interpersonal
   Interpersonal obstacles are obstacles that materialize during information seeking from an individual's interpersonal/social relationships as a member of the social system. The information gap between the communicant and communicator may be the cause of interpersonal communication problems.
4. Environmental and situational
   This factor is an actual situation when information seeking is done in students' learning environment, including: Time, geographic location, and a society/country's culture.
5. Characteristics of information sources.
   There are several influential factors, namely the availability and credibility of information and communication channels (Faber, et.al., 2006).

Before a person really decides to take action in his/her information behaviour, he or she certainly needs a reason that is convincingly advantageous to do information seeking activities. Consequently, one will calculate and weigh the risks and advantages/benefits that will be the consequence.

4. Result and Discussion

Most of the respondents were 17 years old or middle teenagers. Most of the information needs were those of

entertainment. The respondents' information needs for entertainment is a need to release oneself from emotional tension or the need to escape, and desire to find diversion (Yusup, 1995). Information needs of further education after high school is the second highest ranked after entertainment. According to Monks, city teenagers from an educated or well-off family are usually expected (by their parents) to continue education to university (2006:287). The respondents' information needs for government policies were the fewest chosen by the respondents. This was because the respondents did not need information on government policies. Based on the probing results, the students could not care less about government policies. For example, if the government raised fuel tariff, the respondents simply would ask their parents for allowance raise. In other words, the respondents were indifferent about government policies such as operational grants for education.

Largely, SHS students who felt challenged to seek information did so to meet the need for information on jobs and research.

Several factors affecting SHS students' information seeking were: **Psychological** Psychological factors are related with individual motivation of behaviour. Most respondents were motivated by the comfort of library rooms. Therefore, it is recommended to provide comfortable rooms for users' satisfaction. The second largest motivation was peer influence. For teenagers, friends have a very significant influence. Adolescent social development undergoes two movements, namely self-detachment from parents and attachment to peers. Motivation of finishing school homework and love for reading were not the respondents' main reasons although school libraries are supposed to function as a learning support. Thus, this function was not optimal yet. Teacher recommendation ranked the fifth motivation, whereas teachers' role is crucial in library utilization. Teachers are obliged to cultivate student reading habits, by not only verbal suggestion, but also with concrete encouragement such as: assigning students to search for information and use library collection or at least by asking students to use library rooms for discussion. The lowest rank of the respondents' motivation was prestige and using spare time. Libraries were still perceived as a prestigious place. Library users were seen as identical with diligent people. Consequently, to gain a reputation as a diligent student, some students visited libraries. **2) Demographic** which is viewed from aspects such as: Knowledge of how to access the SHS libraries among students was still low. This was evident in the fact that most of them directly went to the book shelves when they needed certain collection. They did not use catalogues/OPAC (online catalogues) because they thought the catalogues were confusing. If the students could not find the collection in question in the shelves, they simply would ask the library staff. This affected the books borrowed. Most of the SHS students borrowed fewer than two books per month. 2) The SHS students' foreign language mastery was relatively low. This was evident in the fact that they preferred collection in Indonesian language. Most of the respondents never used foreign language collection. For the SHS students, understanding collection in foreign language took longer time because they had to translate it first. **3) Role related/interpersonal** are factors from interpersonal relationships with the library service staff during information seeking activities. Most of the respondents held a positive opinion of library staff's service. The respondents considered library staff as friendly, helpful, communicative and agreeable, but a few of them stated that library staff were lazy. This might be caused by the heterogeneity of the service in that it varies according to its forms, quality and types, as well as who, when and where the service is produced. This is because service involves human in the production and consumption stages. Unlike machine, human usually is unpredictable and inconsistent in his attitude and behaviour. Thus, to deliver the best service, human aspects should be specially attended to. **4) Environmental and Situational,** which include: The school library's location. The bulk of respondents thought that their school libraries location was accessible. 2) Library opening hours. The respondents were of opinion that their library working hours were suitable with their leisure time to visit. The library working hours were the same as those of the school. Hence, most of the students visited library during the recess. On average, recess duration was 30 minutes. No wonder that the students visited library for 15-30 minutes only. **5) Characteristics of Information Source** are the availability and credibility of the information and communication channels, include: 1) book matching between those in the shelves and those in the catalogues. The majority of the respondents deemed that books on the shelves were seldom the same as described in the catalogues. This was because collection arrangement on the shelves was unsystematic (disorganized). Therefore, many users had difficulty in finding the desired collection. 2) the time needed to find collection on the shelves was mostly less than 10 minutes, although many needed 10-20 minutes. Regarding the methods of accessing, the majority of the users who did it via catalogues/OPAC and at the same time enquiring the library staff spent 10 minutes of search, while those who directly went to the shelves spent 10-20 minutes. Thus, collection search using the appropriate aids quickened collection finding. 3) in terms of quantity, the available collection was considered incomplete but considered sufficient in terms of variety of titles. The respondents thought that book titles in the library were varied but only for certain collection types. 4) physical condition of collection. The physical condition of the collection was mostly good, but some collection was torn, worn out, and full of scrawls. This might be caused by careless collection preservation or users' vandalism. 5) collection's publication years. The respondents most frequently used school library's collection which was published in the 2010s. The year of publication was the respondents' consideration in using

collection. The not-too-old publication years were believed to contain up-to-date information.

Teacher role becomes an important factor influencing the use of school libraries. According to the respondents, teachers often mentioned the compulsory literature. These teachers also gave the reference sources to access the literature, but the largest part of information channels recommended by teachers was the Internet. School library was not the main reference of information. As for independent assignments, the majority of the SHS students preferred surfing the Internet. They claimed that accessing the internet had the advantage of faster access and extensive information pools.

Most of the respondents stated that they often unintentionally found information in the school library (passive attention). The most used information source was magazines. Besides magazines, the students also used additional books and textbooks. The respondents also did a passive search which is unintentionally finding relevant information that they needed when in the school library. The most required information was that of hobbies while the information source for this type was magazines. When looking for information, most of the respondents (64%) compared several books or information sources, while the remaining (36%) did not. Most of the respondents stated that they communicated/exchanged information with friends on the required information. Only a minority of the respondents chose library staff and teachers as a partner of information sharing.

5. Conclusion

A large of portion of SHS students' information needs was about entertainment and further education (after SHS). The respondents addressed those needs calmly. Most of the SHS students who felt challenged to seek information did so to satisfy the needs for information on jobs and research. There were several factors that could strengthen or weaken them in seeking information, such as: Psychological factors that were related with SHS students' motivation in using school library showed that what motivated them to the library was the comfortable rooms in it (air-conditioned). 2) Demographic factors, which are viewed from aspects such as: SHS students' knowledge on how to access the library was still low, and their foreign language proficiency was also low. The role-related/interpersonal factors had a positive effect on the use of school library. Most of the respondents held a positive opinion of the library staff's service. Environmental and situational factors, which include: the location of the school library that should be reachable and the library working hours that should fit the recess time. The characteristic factors of the information sources, which include: The books on the shelves were often different from those in catalogues; the time needed to find collection on the shelves was mostly less than 10 minutes and some were 10-20 minutes; the available collection was considered incomplete although in terms of title diversity it was acceptable; the physical condition was relatively good, but occasionally the collection was torn, worn out, and full of scrawls; the most widely used collection was those published in the 2010s. Teacher role became an important factor influencing the use of school libraries by recommending students to use information channels.   The most teacher-recommended information channel was the Internet. Many SHS students did information seeking with passive attention, passive search, active search, and ongoing search.

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