

**CHAPTER 3**  
**INFORMATION NEED AND**  
**INFORMATION SEEKING**  
**BEHAVIOUR**

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### **INFORMATION NEED AND INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOUR**

#### **3.1 DEFINITION OF INFORMATION NEED AND INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOUR**

##### **INFORMATION NEED**

The word “information need” is a term that has been discussed and approached from many different angles. This term is related to concepts like “wants”, “requests”, “demands”, and so on. “Information needs” depend on “information requirements” and vice-versa.

**According to Atkin**, the term ‘information need’ is his demand that he seeks to achieve to meet his information requirements (Clarke 307).

**Leuplot** points out that the ‘information needs’ and ‘information requirements’ are mutually interdependent to some extent. Information requirement reflects information need. Again the relation between them i.e., information need and information requirement may be assessed how far information requirements satisfy information need (Leuplot 3-7).

**Wilson** says that various factors influence the information need. They are (i) sources of information available (ii) the quality of sources of information (iii) how those sources can be put to use (iv) the background, motivation, orientation and characteristics of the user. Besides social, political, economic, legal and regulatory systems also affect the information need (Wilson 3).

**Dervin** defines ‘information need’ as a state that arises within a person requiring to fulfill gaps in-between. The suggested word that the person needs to fill up that gap may be termed as ‘information’ to the persons who need it (Dervin 8).

**According to Taylor**, ‘information need’ is a concept which may be expressed as personal and psychological to the persons who need it. It is sometimes expressed in vague and/or unconscious situation (Taylor 179-180).

**Belkin et al.** defines ‘information need’ as a state of knowledge which is different from standard or expected knowledge (Belkin et al. 61-62).

**Grunig** defines ‘information need’ or ‘human need’ as an “inner motivational state that brings about thought and action”. The definition was later on elaborated as ‘inner states’. This ‘inner states’ may include lacking, convincing, doubting, apprehending or expectations (Grunig and Grunig 223).

From the above definitions given by different authors from different angles, we may come to a decision that information need is related to concepts like wants, requests, demands, doubts, fears, expectations and so on. Information needs are purely personal and psychological. It can sometimes be expressed and sometimes it cannot be properly expressed. Information needs also varies from person to person living within the same community or place. Even each member of a family may have the information need different from other members.

### **INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOUR**

“Information seeking behaviour” is the application of attitudes through a set of actions to achieve decided information need (Hemantha Kumar 23).

**According to Wilson**, the word ‘information seeking behaviour’ of an individual is his total behaviour in respect of the sources and channels of information and the information he uses. Face-to-face communication, inactive reception of information,

watching television advertisements and others are included in this information seeking behaviour (Wilson 250).

**Case** defines ‘information seeking behaviour’ as information behaviour that surrounds information seeking as well as the entirety of other undesirable or inactive behaviour that involves avoiding information (Case 235).

**According to Kingrey**, the word ‘information seeking’ is like an umbrella forming an arch over related ideas. Information seeking relates to exercise and involves search, recovery, determination and application of meaningful content. Sometimes it is expressed as social and cultural exchange and disconnected strategies applied when confronting uncertainty. It may be thought of as a primary condition for mankind to live in. It describes the multifaceted relationship of information human beings live in. This relationship includes both active searchings through formal information channel and diversity of attitudes and actions (Kingrey 1-2).

**Razaq et al.** viewed ‘information seeking behaviour’ as complicated actions requiring the ability to reach various information to solve various problems. Information seeking refers to strategies for locating information with three elements: people, information and systems. This also requires the psychological state of the user that may lead him to insight into his expectations to enable him to forecast information selecting activities (Razaq et al.).

**According to Uhegbu**, ‘information seeking behaviour’ may be stated as a way in which an information user operates himself or acts. When accepting or getting information, the utterance, gesture, passion, worries, inclination, unwillingness, enthusiasm or any other attitudes displayed by him constitute his information seeking behaviour (Uhegbu).

**Igwe** defines ‘information seeking behaviour’ as a separate way and manner of collecting information for his individual knowledge, updating and developing. It also refers to the way people search for and utilize information. Information seeking behaviour of students may be cited as an example. It involves effective or purposeful information to complete the course term papers, prepare for class discussions, seminar papers etc. But in the process of information seeking behaviour, sometimes problems may crop up to hinder his actual information (Igwe).

**Kakai et al.** have defined ‘information seeking behaviour’ as an individual’s ways of collecting information for private use, knowledge updating and improvement. Information seeking behaviour is considered as a multifarious dynamics, social human behaviour that needs a picture as rich as possible (Kakai et al. 3).

**According to Majid and Kassim**, ‘information seeking behaviour’ has a broad connotation. This includes a set of actions an individual takes to clear information needs, search information, evaluate and select information and finally uses that information to gratify his information need (Majid and Kassim 2).

From the discussions by the experts noted above, we can come to the following observations.

- (i) Information seeking behaviour is a primary quality in all the people and it is manifested through their particular behaviour.
- (ii) Different people have different information seeking behaviour to satisfy their information needs.
- (iii) Information seeking behaviour when crowned with information needs the person to become successful in his mission and achieves reputation.
- (iv) On the other hand information seeking behaviour when held up by various constraints brings failure on the part of the individuals who seek information.

(v) Generally, information needs and information seeking behaviour are varied and they are related to each other. It seems that a wave of information needs and information seeking behaviour flows continuously throughout the world in all the ages and all the countries. It is an endless process.

### **3.2 INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOUR MODELS**

Models generally represent and give a clear understanding of some special problems where theories are not enough. Often models lead to the improvement of theories through illustrations. The illustrations may include table, graph, map, chart, diagram and others (Hemantha Kumar 23).

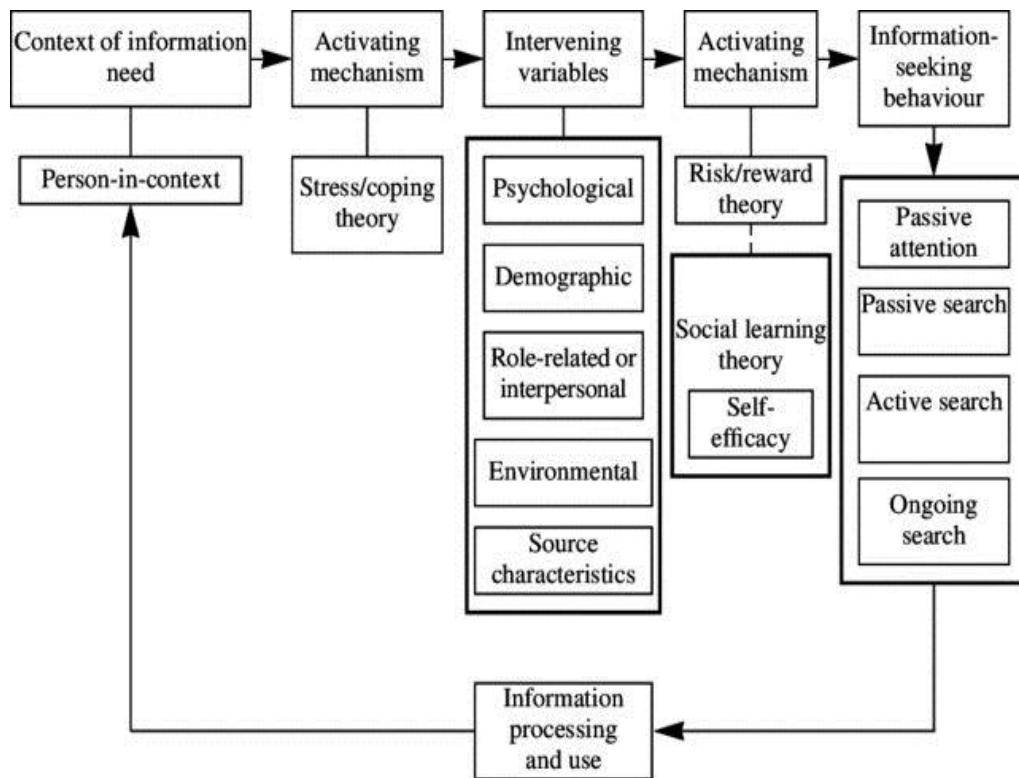
The information seeking behaviour models have been proposed by different scholars from time to time as follows -

- i. Wilson Model - 1981 and 1996
- ii. Dervin Model - 1983 and 1996
- iii. Ellis Model - 1989
- iv. Kuhlthau Model - 1991

The present study closely fits in Wilson's model of information behaviour, 1996. This model displays decision making, psychology, originality, health and consumer research. Wilson's 1996 model is a major edition of his own model of 1981. In this new model (1996) Wilson draws upon research from a number of fields excluding information science. The basic framework of 1981 model revolves around the person who is the centre of information needs. The obstacles are illustrated by 'intervening variables' and 'information seeking behaviour' is identified. The term 'intervening variable' serves to suggest that their impact may be supportive and preventive of

information. Information seeking behaviour is displayed to compose of many types shown earlier where 'active search' was the focus of attention.

Fig. 1: Wilson's 1996 Model of Information Behaviour



The new model as shown above, relates three interlinked theoretical ideas: - (i) stress/coping theory which offers possibilities for interpreting why some needs do not call for information seeking behaviour (ii) risk/reward theory which helps to illustrate which sources of information may be used more than others by a given individual and last (iii) social learning theory which embodies the thought of self-efficacy meaning that one can fruitfully accomplish the behaviour necessary for producing the expected results.

This model of 1996 may be termed as a micro behaviour model. Its expansion and insertion in other theoretical models of behaviour makes it a richer source of hypothesis and further research than Wilson's earlier model (Wilson 256-257).

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