

Awareness and Use of VIDWAN Expert Database and National Researcher Network Among Faculty Members in Non-Technical Colleges in Ahilyanagar District: A Survey

Dr. Anil B. Pawar

Librarian Arts Science and Commerce College, Kolhar Tal- RahataDist- Ahmednagar

Abstract

This study investigates the awareness and utilization of the VIDWAN Expert Database and National Researcher Network among faculty members in non-technical colleges of Ahilyanagar District. The primary aim is to uncover new opportunities that the faculty members should consider in their academic contexts. A compelling case of a national-level initiative for the automated collection and dissemination of the Indian research community's profiles. The Information and Library Network (INFLIBNET) Centre under the National Mission on Education through ICT (NME-ICT) project is the platform on which this undertaking is based. VIDWAN, a platform by INFLIBNET, is basically a global directory of scientists and researchers and academic professionals who are open to research collaboration and can provide information. The present study is aimed at faculty members across the various non-technical disciplines through a structured survey.

The current levels of faculty engagement with VIDWAN are identified along with barriers to its adoption. Strategies to increase the integration of VIDWAN into academic practices are suggested.

Keyword: VIDWAN Expert Database, National Researcher Network, Faculty Awareness

1. INTRODUCTION

Academic networking platforms have become instrumental in facilitating research collaboration and gaining visibility through the internet. INFLIBNET Centre's initiative VIDWAN (Vidwan.inflibnet.ac.in) is intended to be a consolidated database of expert profiles, academic and research information of faculty members all over India. Although its uptake in technical institutions has been remarkable, however, there is a lack of information on its presence in non-technical colleges, especially in the areas such as Ahilyanagar District. This investigation is an attempt to close the gap in the existing literature by examining the knowledge and usage schemes of VIDWAN by the faculty of non-technical colleges of Ahilyanagar district.

2. Objectives

- To find out the level of awareness about VIDWAN among the faculty members of non-technical colleges of Ahilyanagar District.
- To examine the extent and mode of utilization of VIDWAN by these faculty members.

- To recognize the issues and obstacles those have been encountered while adopting VIDWAN.
- To suggest the ways in which VIDWAN can be more effectively used in non-technical academic environments if such means are put into practice.

3. Literature Review

VIDWAN is a directory of scientists, researchers, and faculty members who are involved with teaching and research activities in the whole of India. The INFLIBNET Centre, an autonomous Inter-University Centre of the University Grants Commission (UGC), has been developed and maintained. VIDWAN offers a vast amount of information concerning experts' backgrounds, contact details, academic qualifications, research areas, publications, and other scholarly activities.

The key objectives of VIDWAN are as follows:

- Providing a platform for researchers to communicate with each other.
- Finding suitable peer reviewers for research proposals and articles.
- Identifying individuals who can collaborate with a particular research project.
- Supplying data to funding agencies and policymakers to facilitate their decision-making.

Technical and research-heavy institutions show a pattern of the most active user of VIDWAN. However, the pattern of utilization among disciplines and institutions is less widespread and erratic. 'Non-technical' colleges and other parties that remain largely unaware of the service and hardly use it demonstrate less awareness and utilization.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

A descriptive survey research design was employed to gather quantitative data on the awareness and usage of VIDWAN among faculty members.

4.2 Population and Sample

The study targeted faculty members from non-technical colleges in Ahilyanagar District, encompassing disciplines such as Arts, Commerce, and Social Sciences. A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure representation across various colleges and departments. A total of 200 faculty members were approached, with 100 valid responses received, yielding a response rate of 50%.

4.3 Data Collection Instrument

A structured questionnaire was developed, comprising both closed and open-ended questions. The questionnaire covered areas such as demographic information, awareness of VIDWAN, usage patterns, perceived benefits, and challenges faced.

4.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, , percentages,

5. Data Analysis

The study was carried out in 100 selected Faculties that responded to the questionnaire from Awareness and Use of VIDWAN Expert Database and National Researcher Network among Faculty Members in Non-Technical Colleges in Ahilyanagar District: A Survey.

Table No- 1

Sr. No.	Are you aware of the Vidwan Expert Database and	No.	of	Percentage
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	National Researcher Network?	Respondent	
1.	Yes	58	58%
2.	No	42	42%

Table No. 1 shows that that **58%** of faculty members are aware of the VIDWAN Expert Database and National Researcher Network, while **42%** are not. This suggests a moderately low level of awareness despite the national importance of such platforms.

Table 2

Sr. No.	If yes, how did you come to know about it?	No. of Respondent	Percentage
1.	Through college administration	21	36%
2.	Colleagues	17	29%
3.	Workshops/Seminars	14	24%
4.	Online Resources	26	45%

Table No. 2 shows that awareness of faculty members stated 45% learned through online resources, making it the most significant source. 36% cited college administration, and 29% mentioned colleagues. Only 24% were introduced through seminars or workshops, showing limited institutional effort for direct capacity building.

Table 3

Sr. No.	12. How would you rate your knowledge about Vidwan?	No. of Respondent	Percentage
1.	Excellent	28	48.28 %
2.	Good	6	10.34%
3.	Average	18	31.04%
4.	Poor	6	10.34%

Table No. 3 shows that 28(48.28%), 6(10.34%),18(31.04%),6(10.34 %)respondents, were stated ‘Yes’ for knowledge about Vidwan, Excellent, Good, Average, Poor respectively. It is observed that This reflects a significant awareness-knowledge gap and the need for structured orientation programs.

Table 4.

Sr. No.	Are you registered on the Vidwan platform?	No. of Respondent	Percentage
	Yes	40	40%
	No	60	60 %

Table No. 4shows that only **27%** of respondents are registered on VIDWAN. Among them

Table 5

Sr. No.	If yes, how often do you use it?	No. of Respondent	Percentage
1.	Daily	4	10%

2.	Weekly	5	12.50%
3.	Monthly	6	15%
4.	Rarely	25	62.50%

Table No. 5 shows that 4 (10%),5 (12.50%),6(15%),25(62.50%) respondents were stated 'Yes' for Vidwan database use Daily, Weekly, Monthly, rarely respectively. It is observed that low platform engagement even among those registered.

Table 6

Sr. No.	For what purpose do you use Vidwan	No. of Respondent	Percentage
1.	Showcasing academic profiles	24	60%
2.	Accessing expert information	11	44%
3.	Finding collaborators	9	36%
4.	Networking	7	28%

Table No. 6 shows that 24 (60%),11 (44%),9(36%),7(28 %) respondents were stated 'Yes' for Vidwan database use purpose Showcasing academic profiles, Accessing expert information, Finding collaborators, Networking respectively. It is observed that that most users are using VIDWAN passively, primarily as a profile listing platform rather than for active academic networking.

Table 7.

Sr. No.	Do you find Vidwan user-friendly?	No. of Respondent	Percentage
	Yes	40	40%
	No	60	60 %

Table No. 7 shows that only **40%** found the platform **user-friendly** **60%** expressed dissatisfaction with usability

Table 8

Sr. No.	What challenges do you face while using Vidwan?	No. of Respondent	Percentage
1.	Lack of technical knowledge	16	40%
2.	Limited features	6	24%
3.	Navigation issues	9	36%
4.	Other concerns	8	32%

Table No. 8 shows that 16 (40%),06 (24%),9(36%),8(32 %) respondents were stated 'Yes' for challenges do you face while using Vidwan Lack of technical knowledge, Limited features, Navigation issues, Other concerns, respectively. It is observed These challenges highlight a need for system improvement and better user support from INFLIBNET/college ICT cells.

Table 9

Sr. No.	Do you think more awareness programs are required to promote Vidwan among	No. of Respondent	Percentage
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	faculty members?		
1.	Yes	32	80%
2.	No	8	20%

Table No. 9 shows that 32 (80%), 8 (20%), respondents were stated 'Yes' for awareness programs are required to promote Vidwan among faculty members respectively. This supports the hypothesis that increased institutional efforts—such as workshops, training, and administrative encouragement—would significantly increase the adoption and effective usage of the platform.

Findings

The research has shown that the knowledge of the VIDWAN platform among faculty members in non-technical colleges of Ahilyanagar District is at a moderate level. Nevertheless, the actual usage is low, which is mainly due to lack of institutional support and misbelieve that the platform is not relevant to non-technical disciplines. The good things that the users have identified also indicate that VIDWAN is a good tool for making the academic community more visible and for collaborations in non-technical areas. If the obstacles to using the platform that are mentioned here are eliminated, the acceptance of the platform will be greatly facilitated.

Recommendations

- **Institutional Initiatives:** Colleges should conduct workshops and seminars to educate faculty about VIDWAN's features and benefits.
- **Technical Support:** Establish dedicated support teams to assist faculty in creating and maintaining their VIDWAN profiles.
- **Policy Implementation:** Incorporate VIDWAN registration as part of faculty appraisal and promotion criteria to encourage participation.
- **Awareness Campaigns:** Leverage newsletters, emails, and departmental meetings to disseminate information about VIDWAN.
- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Regularly collect feedback from faculty to identify and address specific challenges in using VIDWAN.

Conclusion

VIDWAN is an excellent tool for the academic and research fields in non-technical colleges. The awareness among a group of faculty members in the Ahilyanagar District is present but more enthusiastic actions are needed to accelerate the use and proper exploitation of this service. Institutions can tap into VIDWAN's entire capacity to create a more united and teamwork academic atmosphere by solving the challenges and putting into practice the proposed strategies.

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