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**Personal Information Management of Research Fellows in University of  
Kerala in the New Normal**

**Anandapadmanabhan. S**

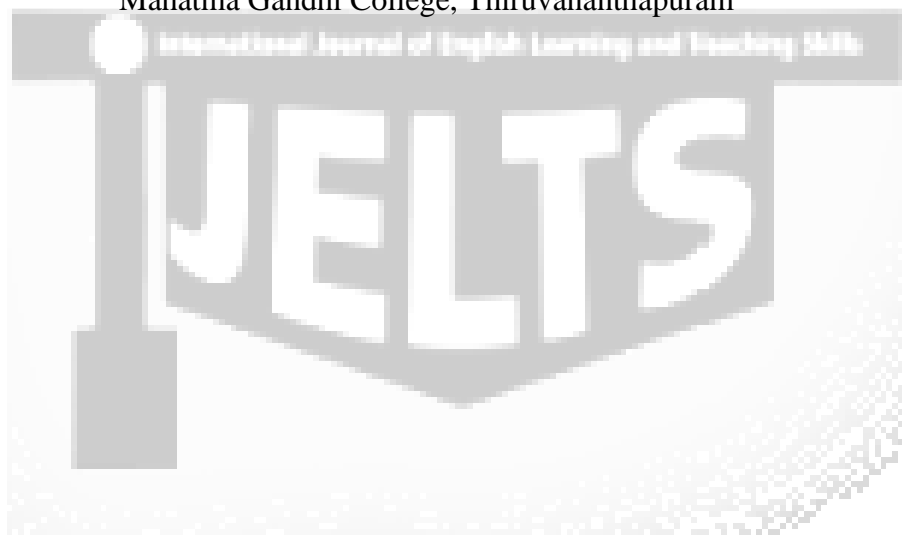
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### Abstract

Personal Information management (PIM) among researchers had undergone drastic changes within the last few years. In the backdrop of high enrolment for PhD and covid pandemic new norms, the practices of information management has changed irreversibly. The tools of PIM are also novel, abundant and complex. To identify the new tools of PIM and the degree of engagement in PIM activities, data is collected from selected Research fellows of University of Kerala in Thiruvananthapuram. The results reveal that laptop PC has emerged as an irreplaceable tool for PIM and Online meeting platform is the order of the day in the new norm.

**Keywords:** Personal information management, tools, activities, pandemic

### Introduction

All India Survey of Higher Education reported (AISHE Report 2019-20, 2020) a huge surge in the number of PhD awarding and admissions across various varsities in India. In Kerala also, the trend of growth in number of PhD admissions are evident. The pandemic of 2019 that ensued for 2 more years has forced the academicians to adopt to IT tools for teaching and work (Rohidas Waghchoure & Dabade, 2020). In the backdrop of this phenomenon and the global pandemic that induced academicians to work remotely or hybrid mode, the researchers' behaviour in Information Management had undergone several changes in a short span of time (Barnes, 2020). It is imperative to identify and address the changes in practices of managing Personal and Research information in the new normal.

### Personal Information Management and Research

Research Information Management is an important function of Research Departments and University Libraries. In the individual level also, a researcher need to collect, store and organise information relating to his research work. In the new normal, with mobilised technology, research fellows are able to store their entire research work in cloud storage, and access it from anywhere through handheld devices.

Personal Information Management tools mainly comprises of Laptop PC, Smartphones, wearables, cloud storage etc. and softwares like reference manager, online meeting platforms, calendars, scheduler, notes etc.

Discussions (Dwivedi et al., 2020) about the implications of covid pandemic in Information management at the state and national level had already been ongoing and it is found that work, communication, information management, pandemic containment measures, health, commerce etc. had undergone drastic changes with the intervention and aid of digital and technological infrastructure.

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Studies have revealed that the productivity and mental health of researchers has affected detrimentally due to Covid pandemic. Their hopes about future were also not much optimistic amidst the pandemic(Lewis, 2021). However there have been a few little studies with regard to their information management practices in the new changed environment.

PIM practices have been found to be influenced by the students' self-efficacy in using mobile phones. Several practices and engagement in PIM activities are undertaken in the form of folder, mobile applications, screenshots, sharing, re-sharing etc. (Ali & Warraich, 2021).

Depending on the affordability and constraints, college students have been recorded to adopt Social media like Facebook, Computer folder and hard drive as PIM tools(Jacques & Fastrez, 2014). Social media interactions have also aroused as a major source of personal archives of social data (Lee et al., 2012).

Personal Information Management of Scholars of University of Kerala have been discussed before also (Divya & Sudhier, 2015). However, it does not take into account the recent growth in technological infrastructure, research facilities, and pandemic. This also warrants the need for a new perspective in to the Personal information management of Researchers. This study is conducted in late 2022, a time when practically no Covid pandemic restrictions remain.

### Objectives of the Study

1. Identifying new Personal Information management tools adopted by research scholars in new normal;
2. Measure the degree of engagement in new Personal information management activities.

For the data collection, questionnaire was administered through Google forms among Research Scholars registered with University of Kerala, spread across various research centres. However, considering the scale of study, a convenient sampling was done among 77 full-time Research Scholars of major research centres in Thiruvananthapuram affiliated with University of Kerala.

## Results and Discussions

### Demography of the respondents

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**Table No. 1 Profile of the respondents**

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	45	58.44
	Male	32	41.55
	<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Age	18-30	44	57.14
	31-40	33	42.85
	<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Stage of Research	Less than 1 year	3	4.3
	1-2 years	47	61.03
	More than 2 years	27	35
	<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Primary data

The selected research fellows contain both males and females and majority have already finished a year in research.

**PIM tools adopted by Research Scholars**

The tools and devices used by Research fellows for Personal information management has been ranked as under, with Rank 1 for tool most used and 4 for least used.

**Table No. 2 Ranking of PIM tools**

PIM tool	N	Rank (mean)
Laptop PC	77	1.12
Tablet (with or without pen)	77	2.60
Smartphone	77	2.77
Wearables like Smartwatch and Earbuds	77	3.52

Source: Primary data

Laptop PC is the PIM tool that was ranked highest by most of the research fellows. The least they use compared with other tools are Wearables like smartwatch, earbuds etc.

**Degree of engagement in Personal information management activities**

For measuring the degree of usage of new PIM tools, a five point Likert scale was

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administered with the following degrees of usage: Most Extensively engaged - 5, Extensively engaged - 4, Slightly engaged - 3, Narrowly engaged - 2, Very narrowly engaged - 1.

**Table No. 3 Mean Score of Degree of engagement PIM activities.**

Sl No.	PIM tools	Mean score
1.	Uploading research work to Cloud Storage (like OneDrive, Google drive etc.)	4.01
2.	Online Calendar for coordination and scheduling	2.06
3.	Notes maker in Smartphone/ Devices	3.88
4.	Using Reference manager software (like Mendeley.)	4.87
5.	Bookmarking of research-relevant websites in Browser	3.11
6.	Organised folder in PC for PhD work	2.88
7.	Organised folder in PC for research work not directly related with your Research topic	2.76
8.	Digital locker for personal details and official documents.	2.22
9.	Using online meeting platforms for attending thesis submission webinars, workshops etc.	4.9
10.	Using online forms for data collection (like Google forms.)	3.76
11.	Using writing software tools (like Grammarly)	3.5
12.	Using Dictionary/ Thesaurus application in devices	4
13.	Listening to Audio books that are related to Research work	3.1
14.	Watching online videos related to Research work	3.6
15.	Following pages/public figures/ institutions in Social media that are related to your research work.	3.4

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The PIM activity that the research fellows always engage in is Using online meeting platforms for attending thesis submission webinars, workshops etc. with mean score of 4.9, followed by Reference Manager (like Mendeley) with mean score 4.87. The research fellows rarely or never engage in the practice of coordinating and scheduling their days through online calendar and keeping digital locker for personal details and documents is also not practiced.

## Conclusion

The study was set out to identify the latest PIM (Personal Information management) tools adopted by the Research fellows and the degree of engaging in PIM activities. The study is conducted in the backdrop of changed research environment in the academic world. The new norm is much different from the old status and is irreversible. The new practices adopted by Research fellows in Research centers in Thiruvananthapuram has been recorded and studied. Almost all have shifted from paper to personal computer when it comes to PIM tools. Almost all meetings, seminars and workshops are conducted with the aid of online platforms.

Further research must be done to find how the information is retrieved and processed by research fellows and the effectiveness of these new PIM tools of research must also be evaluated.

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