

The Role of Perceived Information Overload and Information Seeking Anxiety in Predicting Information Avoidance among Postgraduate Students at Shiraz University

Mahdieh Mirzabeigi¹, Reyhane Bahri²

Received: June, 1, 2025; Revised: December, 14, 2025

Accepted: December, 14, 2025; Published: June, 22, 2026

Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to investigate the role of perceived information overload and information seeking anxiety in predicting information avoidance among postgraduate students at Shiraz University during the 2023–2024 academic year.

Methodology: This research employed a quantitative, descriptive-correlational approach and is fundamental in objective. The study population comprised all postgraduate students enrolled at Shiraz University in the 2023–2024 academic year. A sample of 235 participants was selected using simple random sampling, based on Cochran's formula. A researcher-developed questionnaire was used as the data collection instrument. Its reliability was confirmed through Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability coefficients, while its validity was established via convergent and discriminant validity assessments. The overall construct validity was further confirmed through factor analysis.

Findings: The results indicated that information seeking anxiety significantly predicted perceived information overload ($\beta = 0.805$, $p < .001$), and perceived information overload significantly predicted information avoidance ($\beta = 0.235$, $p = .001$). Furthermore, information seeking anxiety exerted a significant indirect effect on information avoidance, with perceived information overload serving as a mediating variable in this relationship ($\beta = 0.189$, $p < .001$).

Conclusion: Individuals who experience greater anxiety during the information seeking process are likely to perceive higher levels of information overload, which in turn increases their tendency toward information avoidance.

Value: Identifying the factors that influence information avoidance can enhance the awareness of information literacy specialists and assist information system designers in developing optimal systems to reduce perceived information overload and mitigate information avoidance behaviors.

Keywords: *Information Avoidance, Information Seeking Anxiety, Perceived Information Overload.*

How to Cite:

Mirzabeigi, M., & Bahri, R. (2026). The Role of Perceived Information Overload and Information Seeking Anxiety in Predicting Information Avoidance among Postgraduate Students at Shiraz University. *Journal of Knowledge-Research Studies*, 5 (2), 30-47.

Doi: <https://doi.org/10.22034/jkrs.2026.21048>

URL: https://jkrs.tabrizu.ac.ir/article_21048.html?lang=en

Article Type: Original Article

©The Author(s)

Publisher: University of Tabriz

E-ISSN: [2821-045X](#)

The paper is an open access and licensed under the Creative Commons CC BY NC license.



1. Professor, Department of Information and Knowledge Sciences, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology, Shiraz University, Shiraz, Iran. (Corresponding Author). Email: mmirzabeigi@gmail.com.

2. PhD Student in Information and Knowledge Management, Department of Information and Knowledge Science, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology, Shiraz University, Shiraz, Iran.

Extended Abstract

Introduction: Information avoidance is the opposite of information-seeking behavior and is defined as a decision to prevent or delay acquiring available but unwanted information, as well as a decision not to become aware of such information (Fuertes et al., 2020). This behavior occurs for various reasons, including anxiety (Soroya et al., 2021) and perceived information overload (Song et al., 2021). Perceived information overload refers to the feeling of being overwhelmed when faced with a large volume of information (Hong & Kim, 2020). In parallel, information seeking anxiety is a specific form of anxiety that arises from the inability to locate necessary and relevant information during the search process (Erfanmanesh et al., 2012; Ishtiaq et al., 2023).

Given that stress and anxiety experienced by postgraduate students during information retrieval, along with perceived information overload resulting from exposure to large volumes of information, may lead them to avoid the information needed to complete their articles, theses, and dissertations—and ultimately cause delays or incomplete research work (Erfanmanesh et al., 2012)—it is essential to examine the factors influencing information avoidance in this population. A review of the existing literature reveals that to date, no study has investigated the combined effect of information-seeking anxiety and perceived information overload on information avoidance specifically in the context of the information search process.

Purpose: This study aims to investigate the role of perceived information overload and information seeking anxiety in predicting information avoidance among postgraduate students at Shiraz University during the 2023–2024 academic year.

Methodology: This study is quantitative in terms of its fundamental objective and descriptive-correlational in terms of its research design. The research population consisted of all postgraduate students at Shiraz University during the 2023–2024 academic year. The sample was calculated using a random sampling method and based on Cochran's formula, resulting in a sample size of 235 participants. The research instrument was a researcher-developed questionnaire, whose reliability was confirmed by examining Cronbach's alpha coefficient and composite reliability coefficient. Its validity was established through convergent and discriminant validity assessments, and the overall construct was further confirmed through factor analysis. To address the research questions, Pearson correlation was employed using SPSS 27, and confirmatory factor analysis was performed using SmartPLS 3.

Findings: To examine the relationships among information avoidance, perceived information overload, and information seeking anxiety, the normality of the data distribution was first assessed (Table 1). Given that the data were normally distributed, Pearson's correlation test was employed to examine the relationships among the variables (Table 2). The results indicated a positive and significant correlation between information seeking anxiety and perceived information overload ($r = 0.786$, $p < .001$), as well as between perceived information overload and information avoidance ($r = 0.204$, $p = .002$). However, no significant relationship was observed between information avoidance and information seeking anxiety ($r = 0.90$, $p = .167$).



Journal of

Knowledge-Research
Studies (JKRS)

Vol 5

Issue 2

Serial Number 16

To address the second research question, variables that exhibited significant interrelationships were entered into SmartPLS 3 software, along with their respective items and relational paths (Figure 1). Subsequently, Cronbach's alpha coefficients, composite reliability coefficients, and average variance extracted (AVE) values were examined, alongside the fit indices of the initial research model. Upon evaluating the preliminary model, it was found that the model did not achieve an acceptable fit in terms of AVE, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and goodness-of-fit index. Consequently, items with factor loadings below 0.4 were removed from the model to improve its fit.

According to the results of the final research model, information seeking anxiety has a direct, significant, and positive effect on perceived information overload ($\beta = 0.805$, $p < .001$). In turn, perceived information overload has a direct, significant, and positive effect on information avoidance ($\beta = 0.235$, $p = .001$). Furthermore, the findings indicate a significant mediating effect of perceived information overload ($\beta = 0.189$, $p < .001$); in other words, in the absence of the perceived information overload variable, no significant relationship exists between information seeking anxiety and information avoidance (Table 5).



Table 5. Results of the path analysis of the research model.

Effect Path	Direct Effect			Indirect Effect		Total Effect
	p	β	p	β	p	β
Information Seeking Anxiety → Perceived Information Overload	$p < .001^{**}$ *	0.805	---	---	$p < .001^{***}$	0.805
Perceived Information Overload → Information Avoidance	$p < .001^{**}$ *	0.235	---	---	$p < .001^{***}$	0.235
Information Seeking Anxiety → Information Avoidance	---	---	$p < .001^{***}$	0.189	$p < .001^{***}$	0.189

And the final validated model of the research can be seen in Figure 3.

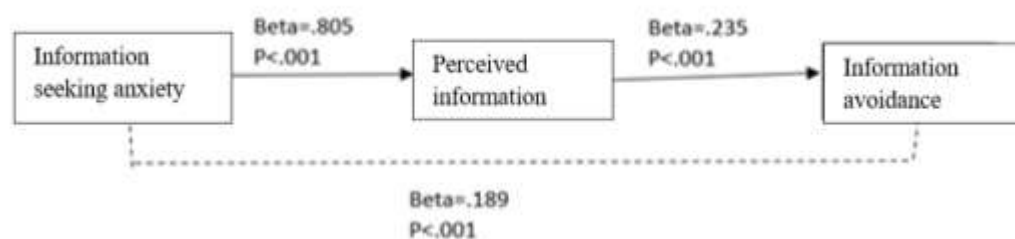


Figure 3. The final research model.

Conclusion: The findings of this study demonstrate that information seeking anxiety, perceived information overload, and information avoidance are

significantly interrelated. More specifically, perceived information overload is directly predicted by information seeking anxiety, and in turn, information avoidance is directly predicted by perceived information overload. Furthermore, information seeking anxiety indirectly predicts information avoidance through the mediation of perceived information overload.



Journal of

Knowledge-Research
Studies (JKRS)

Vol 5

Issue 2

Serial Number 16

Value: Identifying the factors that influence information avoidance among postgraduate students is of considerable importance, as it can serve as a decisive factor in improving the quality of their academic progress and research activities. Given that no comprehensive study has yet examined these components in relation to graduate students' information avoidance, the present research helps to fill this gap. The findings not only raise awareness among information literacy specialists regarding the real challenges faced by students, but also provide valuable guidance for designers of information systems. By developing more efficient and user-friendly platforms, such systems can reduce perceived information overload and, consequently, minimize tendencies toward information avoidance. Furthermore, attention to these factors may support the development of effective educational and advisory programs that assist students in managing the processes of information search and use more successfully, thereby enhancing their overall information literacy and academic performance.

References

- Afolayan, O. (2022). Information seeking anxiety and use of electronic resources among postgraduate students in the University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. *Journal of Balkan Libraries Union*, 9(1), 18–29. <https://doi.org/10.16918/jblu.1036348>
- Ahmadi, E., Hatami, H., & Rangraz, E. (2019). Information Avoidance: A Strategy to Facilitate Emotional Decision Making. *Cognitive Psychology*, 7(3), 26–39. https://jcp.khu.ac.ir/article_4835.html?lang=en [In Persian].
- Bawden, D., & Robinson, L. (2009). The dark side of information: Overload, anxiety and other paradoxes and pathologies. *Journal of Information Science*, 35(2), 180–191. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0165551508095781>
- Bendau, A., Petzold, M. B., Pyrkosch, L., Mascarell Maricic, L., Betzler, F., Rogoll, J., Große, J., Ströhle, A., & Plag, J. (2021). Associations between COVID-19 related media consumption and symptoms of anxiety, depression and COVID-19 related fear in the general population in Germany. *European Archives of Psychiatry and Clinical Neuroscience*, 271, 283–291. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00406-020-01171-6>
- Bermes, A. (2021). Information overload and fake news sharing: A transactional stress perspective exploring the mitigating role of consumers' resilience during COVID-19. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 61, Article 102555. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2021.102555>
- Bina, S., & Browne, G. (2018). Information avoidance in requirements determination for systems development. *AMCIS 2018 Proceedings* (Paper 20). <https://aisel.aisnet.org/amcis2018/AdvancesIS/Presentations/20/>
- Cade, N. L., Garavaglia, S. M., & Hoffman, V. B. (2023). Why some investors avoid accounting information: Identifying a psychological cost of information acquisition using the securities-based crowdfunding setting. *The Accounting Review*, 98(7), 97–120. <https://doi.org/10.2308/tar-2022-0346>
- Chung, D., Chen, Y., & Meng, Y. (2023). Perceived information overload and intention to discontinue use of short-form video: The mediating roles of cognitive and psychological factors. *Behavioral Sciences*, 13(1), Article 50. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs13010050>

- Dai, B., Ali, A., & Wang, H. (2020). Exploring information avoidance intention of social media users: A cognition–affect–conation perspective. *Internet Research*, 30(5), 1455–1478. <https://doi.org/10.1108/INTR-06-2019-0225>
- Erfanmanesh, M. A. (2012). Investigating Information Seeking Anxiety among Postgraduate Students: A Case Study of Iranian Students in Malaysia. *Library and Information Science Research*, 2(1), 53–72. <https://doi.org/10.22067/riis.v2i2.13324> [In Persian].
- Erfanmanesh, M. A., Abrizah, A., & Karim, N. H. A. (2012). Development and validation of the Information Seeking Anxiety Scale. *Malaysian Journal of Library & Information Science*, 17(1), 21–39. <https://jml.um.edu.my/index.php/MJLIS/article/view/1880>
- Foglia, S. (2019). *Information avoidance in risky financial behavior* [Master's thesis, Bryant University]. Bryant Digital Repository. <https://digitalcommons.bryant.edu/macomm/6/>
- Foust, J. L., & Taber, J. M. (2025). Information avoidance: Past perspectives and future directions. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 20(2), 241–263. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17456916231197668>
- Fu, S., Li, H., Liu, Y., Pirkkalainen, H., & Salo, M. (2020). Social media overload, exhaustion, and use discontinuance: Examining the effects of information overload, system feature overload, and social overload. *Information Processing & Management*, 57(6), Article 102307. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ipm.2020.102307>
- Fuertes, M. C. M., Jose, B. M. D., Nem Singh, M. A. A., Rubio, P. E. P., & de Guzman, A. B. (2020). The moderating effects of information overload and academic procrastination on the information avoidance behavior among Filipino undergraduate thesis writers. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, 52(3), 694–712. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0961000619871608>
- Guo, L., Ye, C., Long, F., Liu, X., & Xie, W. (2023). The effect of negative emotional states on short-term memory representations. *Chinese Journal of Applied Psychology*, 29(4), 352–364. <https://www.appliedpsy.cn/CN/abstract/abstract417.shtml>
- Guo, Y., Lu, Z., Kuang, H., & Wang, C. (2020). Information avoidance behavior on social network sites: Information irrelevance, overload, and the moderating role of time pressure. *International Journal of Information Management*, 52, Article 102067. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2020.102067>
- Gupta, D., & Rani, R. (2019). A study of big data evolution and research challenges. *Journal of Information Science*, 45(3), 322–340. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0165551518789880>
- Heinström, J., Nikou, S., & Sormunen, E. (2022). Avoiding negative information as a strategy for emotion regulation. *Information Research*, 27(Special Issue), Article isic2229. <https://doi.org/10.47989/irisic2229>
- Hess, A. N. (Ed.). (2023). *Instructional identities and information literacy* (Vols. 1–3). Association of College & Research Libraries.
- Holmes, E. A., O'Connor, R. C., Perry, V. H., Tracey, I., Wessely, S., Arseneault, L., Ballard, C., Christensen, H., Cohen Silver, R., Everall, I., Ford, T., John, A., Kabir, T., King, K., Madan, I., Michie, S., Przybylski, A. K., Shafran, R., Sweeney, A., . . . Bullmore, E. (2020). Multidisciplinary research priorities for the COVID-19 pandemic: A call for action for mental health science. *The Lancet Psychiatry*, 7(6), 547–560. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366\(20\)30168-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(20)30168-1)
- Hong, H., & Kim, H. J. (2020). Antecedents and consequences of information overload in the COVID-19 pandemic. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(24), Article 9305. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17249305>
- Howell, J. L., & Shepperd, J. A. (2012). Reducing information avoidance through affirmation. *Psychological Science*, 23(2), 141–145. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797611424164>



**Journal of
Knowledge-Research
Studies (JKRS)**

Vol 5

Issue 2

Serial Number 16



Journal of

Knowledge-Research
Studies (JKRS)

Vol 5

Issue 2

Serial Number 16

- Huang, Q., Lei, S., & Ni, B. (2022). Perceived information overload and unverified information sharing on WeChat amid the COVID-19 pandemic: A moderated mediation model of anxiety and perceived herd. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, Article 837820. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.837820>
- Ishtiaq, N., Butt, A. A., & Siddiqi, A. (2023). Relationship and impact of information seeking anxiety and personality traits on health information seeking behavior during COVID-19. *Pakistan Journal of Medical & Health Sciences*, 17(4), 133. <https://doi.org/10.53350/pjmhs2023174133>
- Jensen, J. D., Liu, M., Carcioppolo, N., John, K. K., Krakow, M., & Sun, Y. (2017). Health information seeking and scanning among US adults aged 50–75 years: Testing a key postulate of the information overload model. *Health Informatics Journal*, 23(2), 96–108. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1460458215627290>
- Khaleel, I., Wimmer, B. C., Peterson, G. M., Zaidi, S. T. R., Roehrer, E., Cummings, E., & Lee, K. (2020). Health information overload among health consumers: A scoping review. *Patient Education and Counseling*, 103(1), 15–32. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pec.2019.08.008>
- Kiani, M. R., Dayani, M. H., & Fattahi, R. (2013). A cognitive approach to the non-mandatory use of new conceptual information in the classical structure. *Library and Information Science*, 16(1), 9-39. https://lis.aqr-libjournal.ir/article_42637.html [In Persian].
- Kumalasari, R., & Priharsari, D. (2023). Investigating the role of SNS design on COVID-19 information avoidance: The perspectives of the stimulus-organism-response theory. *Telematics and Informatics Reports*, 11, Article 100083. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.teler.2023.100083>
- Link, E. (2023). Health information avoidance. In E. Y. Ho, C. L. Bylund, J. C. M. van Weert, I. Basnyat, N. Bol, & M. Dean (Eds.), *The international encyclopedia of health communication*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119678816.iehc0947>
- Miao, Y., & Shu, X. (2021). Research on the influence of user perceived overload on information avoidance behavior from the perspective of human-computer interaction. *Journal of Physics: Conference Series*, 1948(1), Article 012147. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1742-6596/1948/1/012147>
- Mohammed, M., Sha'aban, A., Jatau, A. I., Yunusa, I., Isa, A. M., Wada, A. S., Obamiro, K., Zainal, H., & Ibrahim, B. (2022). Assessment of COVID-19 information overload among the general public. *Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities*, 9(1), 184–192. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40615-020-00942-0>
- Mohammed, R. N. (2020). Postgraduate students information seeking behaviour in the faculty of management sciences, Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria. *American International Journal of Multidisciplinary Scientific Research*, 6(4), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.46281/aijmsr.v6i4.916>
- Plass, J. L., & Kalyuga, S. (2019). Four ways of considering emotion in cognitive load theory. *Educational Psychology Review*, 31(2), 339–359. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-019-09473-5>
- Saegert, S. (1973). Crowding: Cognitive overload and behavioral constraint. In W. F. E. Preiser (Ed.), *Environmental design research* (Vol. 2, pp. 254–260). Dowden, Hutchinson & Ross.
- Siebenhaar, K. U., Köther, A. K., & Alpers, G. W. (2020). Dealing with the COVID-19 infodemic: Distress by information, information avoidance, and compliance with preventive measures. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, Article 567905. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.567905>
- Song, S., Yao, X., & Wen, N. (2021). What motivates Chinese consumers to avoid information about the COVID-19 pandemic?: The perspective of the stimulus-organism-response model. *Information Processing & Management*, 58(1), Article 102407. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ipm.2020.102407>
- Soroya, S. H., Farooq, A., Mahmood, K., Isoaho, J., & Zara, S. E. (2021). From information seeking to information avoidance: Understanding the health

- information behavior during a global health crisis. *Information Processing & Management*, 58(2), Article 102440. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ipm.2020.102440>
- Sunstein, C. R. (2019). Ruining popcorn? The welfare effects of information. *Journal of Risk and Uncertainty*, 58(2), 121–142. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11166-019-09300-w>
- Swar, B., Hameed, T., & Reychav, I. (2017). Information overload, psychological ill-being, and behavioral intention to continue online healthcare information search. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 70, 416–425. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.12.068>
- Sweeny, K., Melnyk, D., Miller, W., & Shepperd, J. A. (2010). Information avoidance: Who, what, when, and why. *Review of General Psychology*, 14(4), 340–353. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0021288>
- Sweller, J., van Merriënboer, J. J. G., & Paas, F. (2019). Cognitive architecture and instructional design: 20 years later. *Educational Psychology Review*, 31(2), 261–292. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-019-09465-5>
- Tandoc, E. C., Jr., & Kim, H. K. (2023). Avoiding real news, believing in fake news? Investigating pathways from information overload to misbelief. *Journalism*, 24(6), 1174–1192. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14648849221090744>
- Wang, Z. (2022). *Regret and information avoidance* [Working paper]. SSRN. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4269560>
- Xie, W., Ye, C., & Zhang, W. (2023). Negative emotion reduces visual working memory recall variability: A meta-analytical review. *Emotion*, 23(3), 859–871. <https://doi.org/10.1037/emo0001139>
- Zhang, J., Hu, X., Wu, D., & Yan, H. (2023). Exploring the influence mechanism of Chinese young researchers' academic information avoidance behavior. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 49(2), Article 102649. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2022.102649>



**Journal of
Knowledge-Research
Studies (JKRS)**

Vol 5

Issue 2

Serial Number 16