Do Indian's Interested in Sci-Hub-LibGen Lawsuit: A Look through Google Trends

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Sci-Hub and LibGen (Library Genesis), pirated websites for downloading research publications and books are under legal suit in India for infringing the copyright of three major scholarly content publishers. The major scholarly publishing giants Elsevier Inc, Wiley and ACS have filed a lawsuit against Sci-Hub and LibGen¹. These two sites provide free access to scholarly publications including books. Sci-Hub provides access to almost all scholarly content freely². As it is shown on the one of the various mirror sites of Sci-Hub more than 85,483,812 research articles can be downloaded³. Sci-Hub is under legal tangle with many publishers especially Elsevier Inc in many countries for providing access to millions of papers freely by violating the copyright norms of the publishers⁴. However, Sci-Hub and LibGen both have become an important access point for researchers for downloading research papers and books^{2,5}. Academicians and Researchers across the world have been using these site for downloading research papers and other scholarly contents⁶. More so in developing and low-income countries because of lack of access to paywalled content⁷.

India is also one of the countries which has downloaded the highest number of research papers through Sci-Hub. Because of lack of access to most of the scientific literature through subscriptions or consortia researcher resorts to use Sci-Hub and LibGen. The lawsuit filed by Elsevier, Wiley and ACS in India against Sci-Hub and LibGen for dynamic injunction in Delhi High Court has outraged Indian scientific community⁸. Lot of discussion in various online discussion forums and social media (blogs/twitter) has been happening around this topic in India since the 24th December 2020 when the case was listed for its first hearing. For example, in SpicyIP.com, a leading blog on intellectual property and innovation policy in India.

Here in this study an attempt has been made to investigate the Indian's interest in Sci-Hub-LibGen lawsuit through Google Trends. Google Trends provides the largest real time data on major events. It provides a unique perspective on what people are currently interested in and

curious about. Google Trends has been extensively used for analyzing the online health behavior through Google search queries⁹⁻¹⁰. It has also been used in other domains to assess the public interest or opinion¹¹⁻¹². Google Trends (trends.google.com) provides evidence on how many 'hits' different words had on a particular day on Google. The interest of a particular word is quantified as relative search volume (RSV) with 100 indicating the highest interest and 0 showing no interest at all¹³.

The data for the period of 90 days starting from 05th Dec 2020 to 3rd March 2021 was downloaded from Google Trends website to investigate whether the interest in Sci-Hub and LibGen in India during the hearing of the case was increased or not? The "Sci-Hub" and "LibGen" was the search term used to retrieve the data for the study. The first hearing was heard on 24th Dec 2020, and subsequently it has been heard eight times till 1st March 2021 (Case No.CS (COMM)572/2020). No final judgement has been given on this case so far.

Figure 1 shows the trends of web search term "Sci-Hub" and "LibGen". The Google Trends data shows that there was a keen interest in "Sci-Hub" and "LibGen" in India. From 23rd Dec 2020 the day before when the case was first listed for hearing in Delhi High Court there was an increased interest in Sci-Hub and LibGen search term. On 23rd Dec 2020, the day before the case was scheduled to hear, "Sci-Hub" attracted highest search interest reaching its peak score 100 and LibGen search interest over time was 76. The weeks in which the case was listed for hearing, there was an increased interest in the search term Sci-Hub. Researchers, academicians and IPR experts all have been discussing Sci-Hub-LibGen lawsuit and have spoken about how the dynamic injunction would derail the scientific progress in India, where the access to scholarly literature was very limited through some consortia-based subscriptions. There was also constant increased interest in Sci-Hub and LibGen search term after the first week of February 2021 as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Google Trend Data for Search Query for the Term Sci-Hub and LibGen for the Last 90 Days (05 Dec 2020 to 02 Mar 2021)

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