

EVALUATION OF INFORMATION NEEDS AND BEHAVIOR OF SCHOLARS AND
PROFESSORIATES IN LOCAL ENVIRONMENT IN DEVELOPING REGIONS OF
THE WORLD

By

GOSHIE RHODA WUSA
ABU AHMED ADAMU
AND
ISIAKA CHIKA

Abstract

Purpose: The aim of this research is to evaluate information needs and behavior of scholars and professoriates in local environment in developing regions of the world

Design/ Methodology/ Approach: The paper adopted conceptual approach. Concept of Information seeking, Information behavior for scholars, external environment factors, information needs of scholars, technological environment, literatures, sources used by the professoriates and conclusion.

Implication: If we look at some other characteristics of science, we see that it is a very social activity, that it requires a huge knowledge base, it provides constant need for information, it produces a fair deal of controversy. There are enormous differences between various disciplines.

Originality/Value: In recent years we have seen intensive debates over the changes in scholarly practice caused by increased accessibility of digital resources and tools. This has caused an evident and rapid trend towards the development of different information behaviors by scholars, what information resources they are using, how and when.

Keywords: Information needs, information behavior, professoriates, environmental factors, technological environments and innovation policies

Introduction

In 2000, Wilson described information behavior as the totality of human behavior in relation to sources and channels of information, including both active and passive information-seeking, and information use. He described information seeking behavior as purposive seeking of information as a consequence of a need to satisfy some goal. Information behavior research aims to understand the nature of information, and how individuals interact with information. In this,

information behavior was defined as “how people need, seek, manage, give and use information in different contexts” (Wilson, 2000)

According to Case (2012), information needs do not arise in a vacuum, but rather owe their existence to some history, purpose, and influence. An individual seeks information that will respond to an information need partially determined, constrained, and supported by his or her contextual environment. Wilson (2006) suggests that “basic needs arise out of the roles an individual fills in social life”. Needs may also arise out of societal and cultural expectations, or biological demands.

Every human being or individual has varieties of information needs depending on what the user is trying to find to solve a particular need. In an endeavor to examine human needs, psychologists discovered that the concept of information needs is divided into three (3) types:

(a) Psychological needs, (sometimes called affective or emotional needs) such as the need for attainment and for domination. (b) Cognitive needs, such as the need to plan, to learn a skill or a trade. (c) Physiological needs, such as the need for food, water, clothing and shelter. However, the interrelatedness of these three information needs was emphasized by Abioye (2012) in which physiological needs may prompt affective needs and/or cognitive needs; psychological needs may give rise to cognitive needs; and problems involving satisfaction of cognitive needs (such as failure to satisfy needs, or fear of disclosing needs) may result in psychological needs (reassurance).

Case (2012) defines information seeking as “a conscious effort to acquire information in response to a need or gap in your knowledge”. Research conducted by Kuhlthau (2005) suggests that conceptualizing information seeking as an integrated process directly interconnected to

information needs and information use is the most appropriate method for investigating information behavior (Kuhlthau, 2005.)

Information use is often regarded as the final stage or component of information behavior. Savolainen, (2008) describes the lack of consensus within LIS regarding the definitional nature of “information use”, and the ambiguity surrounding how it is conceptualized. However this ambiguity is less of an issue in research employing the sense-making methodology, where information use is conceptualised in terms of gap-bridging, unlike other areas of LIS research literature, where information use is “frequently referred to but rarely explicated (Savolainen, 2008).

In recent years we have seen intensive debates over the changes in scholarly practice caused by increased accessibility of digital resources and tools. This has caused an evident and rapid trend towards the development of different information behaviors by scholars: what information resources they are using, how and when. Recent studies of scholarly information behavior all show significant changes in the ways researchers communicate, publish their works, collaborate, look for information and use it. Studies describe previously unseen patterns of scholarly information behavior (e.g. skimming, navigating, power browsing, squirrelling, and cross-checking). This, in turn, can (or should) have significant impact on the development of the information tools and information services for scholars.

A developing country is also known as an LMIC, or a low and middle income country. It is less developed than countries classified as “developed countries” but these nations are ranked higher than “less economically developed countries.” These countries are characterized by being less developed industrially and a lower human development index when compared to other

countries. However, developing countries do have the potential for high growth and security when evaluating factors including the standard of living, gross domestic product and per capita income.

Information Environment

Information environment is a man-made construct that is based on the idea that the existence and proliferation of information and information system has created a new operating environment. (Marc, 2013 cited in Oyeleke 2014). Information environment is the aggregate of individuals, organizations, or systems that collect, process, or disseminate information, also included is the information itself. (Olasunkanmi, 2016).

There are two types of information environment according to Henczel (2001). He identified it as: External information environment and internal information environment. The external environmental factors determine the resources and services that are existent (other than those purchased). These external factors are political, economic, social and technological influences while the change in a person's external environment affects the internal environment meaning, the way things are done within a group of people.

Environmental factors and information behavior

Environmental factors are factors such as political, economic and technological in the immediate environment which affect or influence a group of people in their everyday life and activity. Information behavior is used to describe the many ways in which individuals and group of people interact with information, in particular, the ways in which people seek and utilize information. " (Council, Affairs, Organizations, & CODATA, 2004). Environmental factors

represent situational influences and environment in which behavior is performed (World Bank, 1998). These environmental factors can create both opportunities and threat for an individual or a group of people. According to Chen (2010), environmental factor in reference to technological usage formed the basis of his study in internet-usage pattern of immigrants and intercultural adaptation

The external environment factors are the information gathered around the scholars that plays a pivotal role in their information behavior. The external environmental factors also determine the services that might be made available to the scholars in developing countries. For example is the political factors in which contains policies and legislative law of the country and also political stability that may affect the scholars who are not citizens of this country on the way they do some things like moving around, photocopying books, etc. These environmental factors, political, economic and technology influence the information behavior of the scholars as they relate to the scholars information needs, information seeking behavior, information sources, information use as well as their information sharing.

Information needs for scholars in Africa

Information needs, even among people, organizations, and countries of the same group or class, are context-dependent. There are variables, such as cognition, differences in facilities, accessibility to particular sources of information, channels that are used, and so on, that influence the nature of information needs. The degree of need for information will depend on the person's education and other factors, as well as what is available within that person's research environment.

Social political and economic environment: In Africa in the Millennium, editors Maloka and LaRoux identify various issues that confront researchers in the political, social, and economic context of Africa. The authors highlighted issues of interethnic conflicts, wars, regional fragmentation of african leadership, recurrence of military governments, economic stagnation, and international marginalization. They also highlighted the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the related issues of xenophobia and the migration of scientific scholars and the scientific diaspora or brain drain.

Technological Environment: Maloka and LaRoux also highlighted the internet connectivity constraints, commodification of knowledge, and the problem of knowledge production and dissemination as issues that impact the research community in Africa. Institutions of higher learning are now being pushed to move away from basic research into the development of products that they can sell to maintain themselves. World development indicators tend to highlight these factors as a measure of the relative socioeconomic status of the African context.

Innovation Policies: Another peculiarity of African science is the lack of science innovation policies. Most countries have not updated their science information policies, strategies, and priorities. In some countries (e.g. South Africa), however, there has been some attempt to do that. Similar to their counterparts in the North, African researchers and research managers should remain updated and networked with colleagues in the same field; however, in the current circumstances the majority of African researchers find data access and sharing extremely difficult to achieve. Research and innovation managers, who operate in the same environment, find themselves in the same situation. They need information about who the experts are in particular fields and comparative data for analysis of the output of institutions in particular countries.

Political environment: The federal government of Nigeria is composed of three distinct branches: legislative, executive, and judicial, whose powers are vested by the Constitution of Nigeria in the National Assembly, the President, and the federal courts, including the Supreme Court, respectively. Nigeria is a federal republic, with executive power exercised by the president. The president is the head of state, the head of government, and the head of a multi-party system. Nigerian politics takes place within a framework of a federal, presidential, representative democratic republic, in which executive power is exercised by the government. Legislative power is held by the real government and the two chambers of the legislature: the House of Representatives and the Senate. Together, the two chambers make up the law-making body in Nigeria, called the National Assembly, which serves as a check on the executive arm of government. The highest judiciary arm of government in Nigeria is the Supreme Court of Nigeria which was created after independence and also practices Baron de Montesquieu's theory of the separation of powers based on the United States system and also practices checks and balances. Nigeria is a federal republic, with executive power exercised by the president.

Literatures: Nigeria is famous for its English language literature. Things Fall Apart, by Chinua Achebe, is an important book in African literature. With over eight million copies sold worldwide, it has been translated into 50 languages, making Achebe the most translated African writer of all time. Since the 1990s the Nigerian movie industry, sometimes called "Nollywood", has emerged as a fast-growing cultural force all over Africa. Because of the movies, western influences such as music, casual dressing and methods of speaking are to be found all across Nigeria, even in the highly conservative north of the country. Southern Nigeria case by (Simeon

Nwone & Stephen Mutula 2018).The study investigated information seeking behavior of the professoriate in the social sciences and humanities in selected federal universities in southwest Nigeria. The study was a descriptive survey of the professoriate in the social sciences and humanities.

Information needs of the professoriate

From their findings, they noted that the top information needs of the professoriate are information for developing content used for teaching, conducting research, and keeping abreast of current developments in their fields of study. Teaching is a vital part of their professional duty and involves passing acquired knowledge to the intended recipients. These findings are consistent with Tahir, Mahmood and Shafique (2008), where the authors found "teaching or lecture preparation" and "to support research work" to be the main purpose of information seeking.

In a similar study, Okonoko, Emeka-Ukwu and Ayomanor (2015) observed that academic faculty members need information for academic purposes, conducting research and self-development. Likewise, Sujatha (2016) found that faculty seeks information to prepare for class lectures, writing and presenting papers, doing research work, and maintaining up-to-date knowledge. Teaching and research are the most important components of career growth in the academy. The professoriate needs information to prepare for lectures and conduct research in their respective fields. The need for information to keep abreast of current developments gives the professoriate more grounding and authority in their fields of study (Nwone & Mutula, 2018).

Information sources used by the professoriate

Online databases and electronic journals are both used in seeking information for teaching and research. Online databases are hosted on websites and can be accessed using the internet usually through a web browser. Some online databases are free while others can be accessed upon payment of a monthly subscription fee. The findings of this study show a change towards more acceptance of information technology (online databases and e-journal). The dependence on printed sources during this period is linked to an era when the internet was still in its infancy and the development of the internet protocol suite TCP/IP (Transport Control Protocol/Internet Protocol), a standard protocol that allows for internetworking, was still at its developmental stage. Academic libraries in this period acted as the only information source for faculty members and provided only print resources for patrons. Studies conducted during this period reflected the preference for print sources. The result of this study affirms that the professoriate are embracing technology when seeking information and aligns with recent trends in behavioral change in adopting technology due to its ease and convenience in accessing, sharing and using information.

Although Xumei (2010) showed that history professors relied more on old manuscripts, sometimes dating as far as fifty to 100 years, a study on historians' attitudes toward electronic resources, observed an increased use of online catalogues and indexes in finding information sources (Dalton & Charnigo 2004). This finding implies that, though disciplinary context could constrain faculty to seek information in a particular medium, their general attitude towards electronic information resources is changing. To this end, while investigating differences in

culture and discipline in information users, Wang (2006) noted some differences across the two dimensions in the way users rank and use information sources.

Journals and textbooks are the most-used print resources by the professoriate for teaching and research. Print resources remain an important information source for teaching and research despite the growing popularity of electronic information resources. The reason for print's continued relevance is due to some obvious factors such as that it is easy to read from and can be conveniently carried about with no risk, unlike with computers and laptops. Findings from studies (Bello, 2014) revealed that, though some professoriate prefers electronic resources for research, they end up printing the content before reading it. Use of print resources has been found to be context-based. Lawyers and historians use print resources more than their counterparts in the sciences and social sciences (Majid & Kassim 2000). Professoriate in Arabic were observed to rely more on print resources because of the lack of electronic databases in arabic which limits the availability of electronic resources in that language (Al-Suqri 2011). This finding implies that geographical and cultural factors may influence the nature of resources used for teaching. A study (Marouf & Anwar 2010) in the Social Sciences Faculty at Kuwait University confirms this trend, where faculty members depended heavily on books and journals for teaching. A similar study of Spanish faculty members showed participants preferred books to journals and materials in the Spanish language. In other instances, professoriate in the social sciences preferred more print than electronic resources for teaching, and preferred electronic resources over print for research (Khan & Bhatti 2012, Marouf & Anwar 2010, Hannah 2005). As noted by Xumei (2010), much of history is not yet documented electronically, making print resources indispensable for historians. Recent studies by Bello (2014), Folorunso (2014), Khan

& Bhatti (2012), Marouf & Anwar (2010), Tahir, Mahmood & Shafique (2008) supported this evidence and shows that print sources are still very reliable even in the face of growing use of electronic information resources.

Professoriate access to information

The study shows that the professoriate access information for research and teaching from their offices, while a vast majority also access information from their homes. The professoriates that access information from the library are few. The use of an office to access information is expected since the office is their official workspace. After official hours, the office provides an alternative environment for the professoriate to engage in research when not occupied with their families. With the advent of information technology, the professoriate could use either their laptops or office desktop computers to access the university electronic library resources or access other electronic databases via the internet. Like this finding, accessing information from offices by university academics is documented in similar studies (Marouf & Anwar 2010, Abrahamson & Fisher 2007).

Professoriate information sharing

The vast majority of the professoriate frequently shares research and academic information. It is not surprising that research and academic information are the most frequently shared information by this group. Teaching and research are the main task of the professoriate and engaging in them is fundamental to their productivity and growth in academia. Sharing political information comes next and denotes how engaged the professoriate could be in political matters. Political information sharing most often comes in the form of debates and ideological

viewpoints. This sort of non-academic discourse is very common among the academia especially when they gather in informal sessions

Social and economic information follow a similar pattern: shared occasionally by the professoriate. Sharing social information emphasizes the importance of social ties among the professoriate and within the academic community, suggesting that the professoriate are non-exclusive of their social world and their keen participation in social life is a vital part of their total well-being despite their academic status. Moreover, economic information, occasionally shared by the professoriate shows their keen interest and value for economic indicators and measurements vital in assessing the economic world. Since the professoriates have high earning potential, investment in the economy is a sustainable strategy to become financially independent both in the short and long run. Therefore, being aware of what is happening in their economic environment becomes an innate desire that prompts information seeking, and economic information sharing becomes a pattern towards satisfying such a need. Legal, business, personal, medical and technical information needs are rarely shared by the majority of the professoriate, showing that kind of information is less important in the view of the majority of the professoriate.

Medium used by the professoriate to share information

The majority of the professoriate publishes their research outcomes in subscription-based and fee-based open access journals, while about half of the professoriate publishes in no-fee open access journals. Conducting research is part of the academic requirements of the professoriate and publishing their research outcomes is a crucial step to ensure their visibility and relevance. Publishing also offers a way of sharing scientific discoveries in the academic

community and beyond. Without visibility of research outcome, the value of the entire research process is highly diminished. Research is beneficial if the outcome is published in a scholarly journal for public consumption. Visibility of empirical research brings economic gains to both the academic institution and the professor that carried out the research, and forms part of the yardstick used in the evaluation and ultimately in the ranking of the university against other universities nationally and globally (Nwone & Mutula, 2018).

Attitude of the professoriate towards electronic information resources

The professoriate in this study had a positive attitude towards electronic information resources with regards to teaching and research. 'Attitude toward using technology' refers to an individual's overall affective reaction to using a system and is defined as the degree to which an individual believes he or she should use a particular system (Venkatesh et al. 2003). If faculty members have a positive attitude towards using computers for teaching and learning, they will be more satisfied and effective users of electronic resources.

Conclusion

The understanding of information needs and information seeking behavior of the scholars is important in planning, development and implementation of information systems and services that will meet their information seeking patterns. If academic librarians are adequately to serve academic researchers, they must recognize the changing information environment and provide services in accordance with changing needs. Therefore, understanding the information needs and information seeking behaviour and attitude of the scholars is essential to library collection

development, improving services and upgrading facilities to meet the professoriate's need for information effectively.

References

- Adeniran, T. (1984). Four Years Of Presidential Democracy In Nigeria. *Africa Development / Afrique et development*, 9(3), 14–27. Retrieved from Jstor.
- Case, D. O. (Ed.). (2012). *Looking For Information: A Survey Of Research On Information Seeking, Needs And Behavior* (3 Ed). Bingley: Emerald.
- Council, N. R., Affairs, P. And G., Organizations, B. On I. S., & Codata, U. S. N. C. For. (2004). *Open Access And The Public Domain In Digital Data And Information For Science: Proceedings Of An International Symposium*. National Academies Press.
- D. Wilson, T. (2000). Human information behavior. *Informing science: The International Journal of an emerging trans discipline*, 3, 049–056. <https://doi.org/10.28945/576>
- Dervin, B. (1998). Sense-Making Theory and practice: An overview of user interests in knowledge seeking and use. *Journal of knowledge management*, 2(2), 36–46. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13673279810249369>
- Kuhlthau, C. (2005). *Information search process*.
- Nwone, S., & Mutula, S. (2018). Information Seeking behavior of the professoriate in selected Federal Universities in southwest Nigeria. *South African Journal Of Libraries And Information Science*, 84(1), 20–34. <https://doi.org/10.7553/84-1-1733>
- Olasunkanmi, D. O. (2016). *Environmental factors on the information behavior of refugees In Nigeria*. 2(10),13.
- Savolainen, R. (2008). *Everyday Information Practices: A Social Phenomenological Perspective*. Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press.
- Threats, I &. Of m. (2009). *Workshop Overview*. retrieved From <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/Nbk28449/>
- Vilar, P. (2015). Information behavior of scholars. *Libellarium: Journal for the research of writing, books, and cultural heritage institutions*, 7. <https://doi.org/10.15291/Libellarium.V7i1.194>