

David Matsveru

**Information needs and Information
seeking behaviour of Namibian pastors**



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Abstract

This study investigated the information needs and seeking behaviour of pastors in Namibia. The purpose of the study was to establish the information required by pastors to carry out their work, how they seek information and the problems they encounter in doing so. A mixed-method approach research was used to meet the objectives of the study. A stratified quota sample of 200 pastors was used based on Walpole's formula for proportions. One hundred and thirty-eight (69%) participants responded to the questionnaire, while 16 pastors from different denominations in Windhoek, purposively selected as key informants, were interviewed. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) basic level descriptive statistics were used to analyse quantitative data from the questionnaires, while content analysis was used to analyse qualitative data from the interviews.

The findings of this research are that pastors need information for counselling, community development, administration, evangelism, preaching, teaching, public relations and leading a service. When pastors do not find information from formal sources (Bible concordances, Bible commentaries, Bible translations, etc.) in their personal libraries, they turn to informal sources of information (Holy Spirit and other experienced pastors). The respondents revealed that their information seeking behaviour is affected by the fact that existing information is either in languages they do not understand or is not relevant to their contexts. They also pointed out that they lack skills to search the Internet, and the majority have no money to buy computers or subscribe to the Internet.

Many organisations are involved in the provision of pastoral information services but they lack coordination to serve the pastors effectively. A framework for setting up pastoral information services has been proposed. The researcher recommends that the Council of Churches in Namibia (CCN), the Pastors' Book Set (PBS) programme, theological colleges, and local churches work together to systematically provide pastors with the necessary resources. They should periodically assess the information needs and information seeking behaviour of pastors. They need to jointly run workshops to make pastors aware of available sources of information, to encourage the sharing of information among pastors, and to equip pastors with computer and Internet skills. There is also need to repackage information into local languages and in formats that pastors can access easily.

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to Florence (my wife), Laretta and Kundaimunashe (my children) in appreciation for their patience, support and understanding, which brought this thesis to completion.

Abbreviations and acronyms

AAC	-	Apostolic Assemblies of Christ
AACJM	-	African Apostle Church of Johane Marange
AC	-	Anglican Church
AFM	-	Apostolic Faith Mission
AIDS	-	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AMEC	-	African Methodist Episcopal Church
AMI	-	Alleluia Ministries International
ANC	-	All Nations Church
AOG	-	Assemblies of God
APCG	-	Assembly's People Church of God
BCM	-	Back to Christ Ministry
BCs	-	Baptist Churches
CA	-	Church of Africa
CAG	-	Coastal Assemblies of God
CATC	-	Church at the Crossroads
CC	-	Catholic Church
CCN	-	Council of Churches in Namibia
CEC	-	Christ Embassy Church
CGWM	-	Church of God World Missions
CJCLS	-	Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints
CN	-	Church of the Nazarene
COC	-	Church of Christ
CPC	-	Calvin Protestant Church
CPM	-	Camel Pentecostal Ministries
CRC	-	Christian Revival Church
DDE	-	Department of Distance Education

DLBC	-	Deeper Life Bible Church
DRC	-	Dutch Reformed Church
EBC	-	Evangelical Bible Church
EC	-	Emmanuel Church
ELCIN	-	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia
ELCRN	-	Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia
EMC	-	Evangelical Mission Church
FC	-	Followers of Christ
FFMI	-	Forward in Faith Ministries International
FGC	-	Full Gospel Church
FICG	-	Fuller Institute of Church Growth
GELC	-	German Evangelical Lutheran Church
GHFM	-	God's Healing Family Ministries
GMC	-	Gospel Mission Church
GOC	-	Gospel Outreach Church
GTM	-	Gospel Truth Ministries
HIV	-	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HPCC	-	His People Christian Church
ICTs	-	Information Communication Technologies
JSTOR	-	Journal Storage
JW	-	Jehovah's Witnesses
KCC	-	Khomasdal Community Church
KFBMI	-	Kingdom Faith Builders Ministries International
KIM	-	Kingdom Identity Ministries
LISA	-	Library and Information Science Abstracts
LISTA	-	Library Information Science Technology Abstracts
MBC	-	Mennonite Brethren Church
MCSA	-	Methodist Church of Southern Africa

NAC	-	New Apostolic Church
NASB	-	New American Standard Bible
NETS	-	Namibia Evangelical Theological Seminary
NSFC	-	New Song Family Church
NWAHG	-	No Walls Apostolic House of God
OVC	-	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
PAC	-	Pentecostal Assemblies Church
PHCF	-	Potter House Christian Fellowship
PPC	-	Pentecostal Protestant Church
PUC	-	Protestant Unity Church
RC	-	Rhenish Church
RCCG	-	Redeemed Christian Church of God
RCI	-	Revival Centres International
RM	-	Restoration Ministries
SADC	-	Southern African Development Community
SDA	-	Seventh-day Adventist
SDI	-	Selective Dissemination of Information
SPSS	-	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
UCC	-	United Church of Christ
UCC	-	United Congregational Church
UMC	-	United Methodist Church
URC	-	Uniting Reformed Church
ZCC	-	Zion Christian Church

CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Pastors are trained people who have devoted their lives to serving God by imparting biblical wisdom and guidance to society. Their responsibilities include administration, evangelism, preaching, directing prayers or services, community development, public relations, youth services, accounting, member care, teaching and counselling, including HIV and AIDS counselling (Warren, 1995, p. 49). They give people emotional support and comfort in times of sadness or joy. Individuals, families and nations rely on them in relation to a number of problems ranging from social to religious issues.

The Namibian President Hifikepunye Pohamba in March 2007 called on religious leaders to consult on the issue of moral decay in Namibia, particularly the issue of HIV and AIDS (Isaacs, 2007). This shows the importance the Namibian government has placed on pastors. As pastors work with individuals, families, and nations, they definitely need information.

The word 'pastor' is a Latin word for herdsman (Harper, 2010). It is an official title for a priest or a preacher in a local church. Their qualifications and ordination vary from denomination to denomination. The biblical mandate for pastors is that they are to be above reproach, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not lovers of money, able to manage their own households well, not a new convert, but someone who enjoys a good reputation with those outside the church (1Tim 3:2-7).

This study seeks to establish the information needs and information seeking behaviour of pastors in Namibia. An information need is recognition that knowledge is inadequate to satisfy a goal (Case, 2002), while information seeking behaviour is that conscious effort to acquire information in response to that need (Eskola, 1998).

1.2 Orientation of the study

Research on information needs and information seeking behaviour of different information user groups has been carried out over the years on university students (Eskola, 1998), on theologians (Gorman, 1990), on women in small businesses (Mchombu, 2000) and recently on orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) (Mchombu, 2008). However, studies on information needs and information seeking behaviour of pastors are rare despite the fact that 91.44% of Namibians claim to be Christians (Mandryk, 2010) and as such, many pastors are serving them in one way or the other. In Namibia, pastors play a very important role in communities and as such, information service providers need to establish how pastors seek information and what problems they encounter. Verified information can then be used to tailor-make information services to meet pastors' information needs.

Few similar studies on pastors' information needs and information seeking behaviour have been conducted. Gorman (1990) carried out a quantitative survey on the information seeking behaviour of theologians. Theologians are people who study or have studied theology and are not necessarily pastoring or intending to pastor a church. While this group may fall within the category of pastors, the reality is that their setting is different from a person running a church on a day-to-day basis. Michels (2005) used a qualitative study with only seven participants on informal

information seeking behaviour of biblical studies scholars. As much as this researcher respects qualitative research because of its depth, he strongly feels that Michel's study was used narrowly and on a very limited population. A study of this nature also requires that participants be pastors who reside over a local congregation.

Limited access to contextual information sources to counsel, preach and teach is one of the challenges faced by pastors in carrying out their different roles. Pastors are limited in their capacity to access contextual information in many ways, for example lack of knowledge, technological limitations and non-availability of information sources in local languages. They may fail to perform their duties because they either do not understand what relevant information is needed and/or they do not know how to obtain it with efficiency (The Shams Group, 2005). For example, there is a general belief that fighting HIV and AIDS in Africa is not only a medical issue but also a religious issue and hence the need to involve pastors. African governments have often referred to it as a multi-sectoral approach (Isaacs, 2007). However, sometimes pastors are ignorant of relevant information in order to gain access to a wide range of resources.

1.3 Statement of the problem

Pastors train in different institutions and serve in denominations and congregations that vary socially, economically, politically and spiritually, and hence their information seeking behaviours could be affected by their different contexts (Ronald & Wicks, 2009). Although pastors in Namibia may be performing well in their pastoral roles, it is necessary to know how well equipped and informed they are to deal with these important issues. This researcher's personal discussions with some

pastors and church members before the study was carried out indicated that some pastors are inadequately informed to cope with their ministry demands. The researcher also noted that no studies have been done on information needs and information seeking behaviour of pastors in Namibia. This study explored the suitability of Wilson's (1996) model of information seeking behaviour and Dervin's (2003) sense-making theory in designing a suitable information service for pastors in Namibia after understanding their information needs and seeking behaviours in their endeavour to fulfil their different roles.

1.4 Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study was to establish the information needs and information seeking behaviour of pastors in Namibia. To attain this broad objective the research was guided by the following specific objectives:

1. To establish the information needs and information seeking behaviour of pastors;
2. To determine the perceptions of pastors on their preparedness for their pastoral duties;
3. To establish the information sources used and how they are used;
4. To investigate factors affecting pastors' information seeking behaviour; and
5. To come up with a framework for setting up pastoral information services in Namibia.

1.5 Significance of the study

Significance refers to the application and meaning of the study to ‘the real world’ (Berg, 1994, p. 34); in this case theological information providers, churches and Bible colleges in general and pastors in particular. The findings of this research are significant in that they:

- Lead to a better understanding of pastoral information needs;
- Identify the information sources pastors already have access to and the existing gaps in information access;
- Influence policy- and decision-makers (churches and theological institutions) and religious information service providers (theological libraries); and
- Contribute to academic knowledge on the subject of information needs and seeking behaviour of pastors.

1.6 Limitation of the study

Although a survey was conducted nationally, 110 (80%) out of the 138 respondents who returned the questionnaire were from Windhoek. Interviews that were conducted gathered qualitative data from 16 key informants (pastors) based in Windhoek. This was necessitated by the fact that all major churches are represented in Windhoek. The researcher recommends that further research on “information seeking behaviour of rural pastors in Namibia” be carried out, as rural and urban contexts are different.

1.7 Literature review

In preparation for this study, “information needs and information seeking behaviour of Namibian pastors”, a preliminary literature review was undertaken based on the

assumption that knowledge accumulates and that researchers learn from and build on what others have done (Neuman, 2011, p. 111).

A number of databases were searched (LISA, LISTA and JSTOR). The researcher noted that a number of studies have been conducted on information needs and information seeking behaviour in general. However, very little was found on information needs and information seeking behaviour of pastors. In their studies on information seeking behaviour of theologians, Gorman (1990) and Wicks (1999) found that theologians rely heavily on “invisible colleges”. An invisible college refers to a situation where theologians depend on each other for the exchange of ideas. This is the same concept Crane (1972) has referred to as a “social circle” or “social network”. When the social network theory is applied to information needs, the premise is that, “social networks to which individuals adhere affect the way in which they seek information” (Wicks, 1997, p. 156). By this, Wicks meant that social networks of which one is a member affect the individual’s information seeking attitude.

According to Wicks (1999) even though pastors use libraries, in most cases they build their personal collection during their time of training. When they go to a library, they tend to function independently of librarians. He goes further to say that pastors seek information by themselves, and enjoy browsing shelves and scanning journals. Wicks’ study does not give an exact setting of the pastor serving in a local church. It focuses on lecturers and students in a seminary setup. However, the researcher finds Wicks’ study helpful as it shows how information seeking behaviour is developed in the lives of pastors-to-be.