Analysing information needs and information seeking behaviour of members of Catholic Religious Institutes in the Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya

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Abstract
The aim of the study was to analyze the information needs and information seeking behaviour of members of the Catholic Religious Institutes (CRIs) in the Archdiocese of Nairobi. Survey method was adopted for the study. The study population consisted of priests, religious brothers and sisters in the Archdiocese of Nairobi. A total of 95 members of CRIs participated in the study. Data was collected through self-administered questionnaires and interview schedules. The major findings of the study were that members of the CRIs faced various challenges that inhibited effective access and use of information. The following recommendations were made based on the research findings that is; the CRIs directors should support training of their staff in library and information science in order to improve the provision of services through qualified staff, those CRIs which do not have internet connectivity should connect the internet to the libraries to enable their members access electronic resources, they should also adopt easier ways such as WI-FI in providing internet services to their members, the CRIs should provide diverse collection to their members other than religious information materials, the CRIs directors should recognize the role of library in the members apostolate and give support in building library infrastructure, and finally creation of awareness of availability of electronic resources among CRIs members to enable them utilize the available resources.

Keyword: Clergy information seeking behavior, Information needs, Information seeking behavior, Members of the Catholic religious institutes.

Background information: The study was carried out in the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi situated in Nairobi County. The Catholic Church in Kenya is made up of four ecclesiastical provinces (Archdioceses) which include Nairobi Metropolitan, Nyeri

Metropolitan, Kisumu Metropolitan and Mombasa Metropolitan. The Archdiocese of Nairobi comprises of Nairobi County and the Districts of Kiambu and part of Thika Sub-County. The Archdiocese of Nairobi consists of the diocese of Ngong, Machakos, Kitui, Nakuru, Kericho and Military Ordinariate. The dioceses are headed by Bishops. The dioceses are further divided into parishes which are under the authority of parish priest. Currently in the archdiocese of Nairobi, there are 98 parishes and 12 deaneries (Catholic Directory of Kenya 2006.) The members of these religious orders and congregations have pronounced public vows either perpetual or temporary, and live a common life (cc. 607). The members live together in religious houses and share a common life. According to code of Canon law (Cc. 608) religious houses are legitimately constituted under the authority of the superior designated according to the norm of law. Driven by their *charism the* members of the Catholic religious institutes (CRIs) are involved in apostolate and evangelization.

Information seeking behavior: Majid, Anwar & Eisenschitz (2000) describes information-seeking behavior as a broad term encompassing the way individuals articulate their information needs, seek, evaluate, select, and use the needed information. Information seeking behaviour results from the recognition of some need, perceived by the user, whom as a consequence makes demands upon formal systems such as libraries, information centres, on-line services or some other persons in order to satisfy the perceived need (Osiobe, 1988). Prasad (2000) identifies the process of information seeking behaviour as;

(a.) Identifying objective
(b.) Defining need
(c.) Accessing information systems
(d.) Establishing sources of information
(e.) Information acquisition
(f.) Use of information
(g.) Satisfaction/dissatisfaction

Purpose of the Study: The aim of the study was to investigate the information needs and seeking behaviour of members of Catholic religious institutes in the Archdiocese of Nairobi. It was guided by the following objectives, to;

- Determine the characteristics of the members of the Catholic religious institutes in the archdiocese of Nairobi,
- Identify the information needs of members of Catholic religious institutes,
- Determine the information resources used by members of Catholic religious institutes, determine the information seeking habits of members of Catholic religious institutes,
- Identify the major challenges facing members of Catholic religious institutes in accessing and using the needed information.

Research methodology: The study was carried out among the members of the Catholic Religious Institutes in the Archdiocese of Nairobi. The study adopted qualitative and qualitative designs while descriptive survey method was used. The study population consisted members of the Catholic religious institutes including religious brothers, religious

sisters and priests in the archdiocese of Nairobi. Stratified sampling technique was used to select the study sample. A total of 95 members of the CRIs and 30 directors/managers in charge of CRIs in the archdiocese of Nairobi participated in the study. Data was collected through self-administered questionnaires and interview schedule. Data was collected using self- administered questionnaires and interview schedules.

Results and discussion: A total of 95 questionnaires were distributed to the members of the Catholic religious institutes within the Archdiocese of Nairobi out of these 82 were completed and returned to the researcher translating to 86% response rate.

*Educational Level of members of CRIs***:** According to the findings members of the Catholic religious were highly educated 76.8% had university education, 11% of the members had attained middle level education, while 8.5% had secondary level education. For those Managers/directors who participated in the study, 10% had Doctorates degrees, 43.3% had bachelor's degree, and 23.3% had master's degree, while 10% had diploma certificates.

Professional/technical training among the members of the CRIs: The findings revealed that the members of the Catholic religious institutes had undertaken further training either professional or technical, 68.3% members had professional/technical training, and only 31.7% did not have any professional or technical training. For those CRIs members who had Professional/technical training they were trained in; Catechism (8.5%), Education (29.3%), Social work (11%), guidance and counseling (2.4%), Psychology (2.4%), and other courses (15.9%). A total of 25 members did not respond to the question.

Information Needs of the Members of the Catholic Religious Institutes: A total of 76.8% of the members reported they had information needs while 10% indicated they did not have any information needs. According to the findings revealed CRIs members searched for information for various purposes that is, information for education and training, research, continuing professional training, decision making and problem solving, current affairs, teaching, worship, and keeping abreast with area of training. The findings revealed that a significant number of members 37.8% were able to meet their information needs, while only 11% were not able to satisfy their information needs. They satisfied their information needs through informal and formal sources.

Information Resources Used by the Members of the Catholic Religious Institutes: The major sources of information used by the members of the Catholic religious institutes were their religious institute's library at 59.8% and virtual libraries (internet) at 52.2%. Others sources of information they used; other religious institutes, libraries of other ecclesiastical educational institutions, and public libraries. 90.2% of CRIs in the Archdiocese of Nairobi had their own libraries. The Catholic religious institute's collection included both primary and secondary sources of information. Journals and newspapers were ranked high as the main-primary sources of information in religious institute's libraries, other primary sources of information included reports and dissertation/thesis. Textbooks and dictionaries with 78% and 68.3% respectively ranked high as the main secondary sources of information in religious institutes' libraries. Other sources of secondary information in Catholic religious institutes' libraries included handbooks, biographies, maps and atlases, travel guides and directories. The CRIs collection consisted of 85.4% of printed information materials While 14.6% were electronic materials/ audio visual materials.

A total of 56.1% of Catholic religious libraries were connected to the internet while 31.7% did not have access to internet. In terms of subject composition 64.6% of the CRIs library collections included both religious and non-religious materials, while 26.8% of Catholic religious institute's collection was predominantly religious information materials.

The findings revealed that 29.3% were able to satisfy their work role information needs while 47.6% were not able to satisfy their information needs.

Information Seeking Habits of the Members of the Catholic Religious Institutes: A total of 59.8% of the members of the Catholic religious institutes had undertaken information literacy training, while 31.7% of the members have never had any information literacy training.

A total of 86.6% members of the Catholic religious institutes were computer literate, only a few members 6.1% who did not have computer skills an indication that most members have the requisite computer skills needed for information searching and retrieval in an electronic environment. This was also evident since more than 95.1% of the members of the Catholic religious institutes reported they were able to retrieve information from the internet.

The preferred information resources among members were library books with 72% followed by the internet with 69.5%. Others 29.3% preferred mass media (radio and TV) as their source of information.

Members of CRIs 90.2% knew how to search for needed information personally while, 3.7% did not know how to seek for needed information. For those who did not know how to search for needed information they enlisted the help of colleagues and librarians. The CRIs visited the library. The most borrowed information materials by the members of the Catholic religious institutes were work related at 61% followed by informational books at 46.3% other materials borrowed included religious books and leisure books.

Challenges Faced by Members of Catholic Religious Institutes in Using the Library: Some of the challenges experienced by members of the Catholic religious institutes in accessing library service included;

Lack of enough time to visit the libraries, 46.3% of the members cited it as the major problem. This problem could be closely linked to the busy schedules of the members since the members were involved in various apostolate/ service to the community.

Inadequate numbers of relevant books: members of the Catholic religious institutes complained of inadequate information materials. This problem could also be linked to lack of funds as cited by the directors/managers in charge of the religious institutes. The directors indicated that the little funds available were always allocated to priority areas such as members' trainings, funding of projects for the community, and supporting their primary goal of evangelization.

Library closure was least as one to problem facing members of CRIs with only a few members 7.3% reporting as a problem. That may be an indication that the library closing and opening hours are meeting the expectation of the members of the Catholic religious institutes.

Although there were several members of the Catholic religious institutes whose national language was neither English nor Kiswahili, books with unfamiliar language were ranked least as a challenge in accessing library services. Only 2.4% of the members indicated it as a challenge.

One of the challenges experienced by the directors/ managers of the Catholic religious institutes was lack of funds. This could be closely related to other challenges such as the lack of inadequate information materials in libraries and lack of internet connectivity in some of the Catholic religious institutes.

The directors/managers also cited lack of training in library science among members as another challenge. The directors/managers reported that very few members are trained librarians. Some personnel providing library services in CRIs are not trained librarians.

Conclusions: As per the findings members of the Catholic religious institutes were highly educated. They were also involved in various apostolate which included; evangelical, religious instruction, healthcare, education, social work, community development among others. This implies that for the members to be able to effectively carry out their work or service to the community they require information. Information helps in decision making.

The findings revealed there were quite a significant number of members of CRIs 47.6% who were not able to satisfy their information needs exposing the inadequacy of the information services provided within the Catholic religious institutes.

The findings also revealed that majority of the Catholic religious institutes are still stuck with the traditional printed materials. Finally in conclusion it can be said that the information needs of the members of the Catholic religious institutes are tied to their work

roles. They required information for various purposes in line with their service to the community.

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