

## *Information-seeking Behavior of the Ulama in Relation to Preaching and Counseling Roles in Nigeria*

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**ABSTRACT:** The study of information-seeking behavior has over the years attracted the attention of information professionals, resulting in numerous studies conducted with a view to understanding why people seek information, how they seek it, and the problems they encounter. While the information-seeking behavior of several professional groups has been studied, an important and influential group of professionals, Muslim clerics (*Ulama*; sing.--*Alim*) has been totally neglected. Thus, the main objective of this study was to investigate the information-seeking behavior of the *Ulama* in a developing country. The study investigated such questions as how do the *Ulama* in Nigeria seek information to perform their preaching and counseling roles? What search strategies do they deploy? Is there a relationship between demographic factors and information seeking patterns? The study used the survey research method. The target population was made up of 973 *Ulama* dispersed within 27 Local Government Areas of Borno State in Nigeria. A proportional stratified random sampling technique was used to arrive at the sample size of 281. The study used a questionnaire to collect data which was subjected to both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses. The study found out that the *Ulama* consult different sources and resources for different roles. For purposes of preaching, the *Ulama* mostly consult their personal collections to use resources such as the Qur'an, Hadith, and commentaries by other scholars. However, when performing a counseling role, they consult secular resources and informal channels of information such as council of *Ulama*, colleagues, or friends and relatives. The study also found out that the *Ulama* deployed different search strategies to identify and locate information when using public and institutional libraries, information and communication technology facilities, or informal channels. The study has also established significant relationships between demographic factors and search strategies adopted. Finally, the study identified the similarities and differences between the information-seeking behaviors of the Christian clergy and the *Ulama*.

### INTRODUCTION

The shift in emphasis from the study of information systems to the individual as the finder and user of information has over the years received significant attention among librarians and information professionals as indicated by the large amount of research carried out in this area. Various groups, ranging from professionals such as doctors, engineers, and scientists, to the less formally educated such as janitors, fishermen, and the rural populace, have been studied to identify their information-seeking behavior. One important professional group with an influential role in the lives of individuals and society that has not been given sufficient attention is the clergy.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, while a search of the literature shows a considerable number of studies on the clergy, especially in the United States and Canada, Dutta lamented that “there are a relatively small number of studies

<sup>1</sup> D. Wicks, “Information-Seeking Behavior of Pastoral Clergy: a Study of the Interaction of their Work Worlds and Work Roles.” *Library and Information Science Research* 21(1999): 206 lamented that the clergy as a professional group has not been adequately covered in terms of their information-seeking behavior.

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done on the information behavior of the citizens of developing countries, and the few studies concentrated on educated individuals and certain geographic areas of the urban population.”<sup>2</sup> It is in light of the above that this study investigates the information-seeking behavior of Muslim clerics (*Ulama*) in relation to their preaching and counseling roles with particular reference to Borno State in Nigeria.

The study is conceptualized based on Leckie, Pettigrew, and Sylvain’s Professional Information Searching Strategy Model. The model

arose out of a careful consideration of the research literature on different groups of professionals, and intended to be generalized across the professions—those service-oriented occupations having a theoretical knowledge base, requiring extensive formal postsecondary education, having a self-governing association, and adhering to internally developed codes of ethics or other statements of principle.<sup>3</sup>

The researchers identified doctors, lawyers, teachers, clergy, nurses, librarians, accountants, and engineers as exhibiting some or all of these criteria. Although the model has been criticized as being procedural and limited in application, it is still considered to be the most explicit in terms of studying the information-seeking behavior of professionals.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, studying the information-seeking behavior of a professional group such as the *Ulama* can reasonably be conceptualized within the context of the model.

The model that is depicted in figure 1 as flowing from top to bottom features six factors connected by arrows, all but one of them unidirectional. The causal process begins on the top with “work roles,” identified in this study as the preaching and counseling roles of the *Ulama*. To perform these roles effectively, certain specific tasks have to be accomplished. For example, within the preaching role the tasks involved include delivering Friday sermons, translating the Qur’an to a congregation, and interpreting current events not adequately addressed by the scriptures and earlier scholars. Tasks within the counseling role include care-giving, visiting the sick, and condoling the grieved (fig. 1).

Although individual demographics are not depicted in the model itself, they are regarded as variables that influence or shape information needs. Demographic variables included in the present study are age, education, professional experience, denomination, and sectarian affiliations.

The results of information seeking, labeled “outcomes,” can be either positive or negative, and can affect other aspects of the search through feedback loops to “sources of information,” “awareness of information,” and “information is sought.” Where the “outcome” is positive or satisfying, the search strategies were effective, thus relevant information was identified and located. However, where the “outcome” is negative or unsatisfactory, this is a possible indication of a poor search strategy, among other variables affecting successful information seeking. As a consequence, the search has to be conducted again using different strategies which may produce positive “outcomes.”

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<sup>2</sup> R. Dutta, “Information Needs and Information-seeking Behavior in Developing Countries: a Review of the Research,” *International Information and Library Review* 41 (2009): 45.

<sup>3</sup> G. J. Leckie, K. E. Pettigrew, and C. Sylvain, “Modeling the Information Seeking of Professionals: General Model Derived from Research on Engineers, Health Care Professionals and Lawyers,” *Library Quarterly* 66 (1996): 162

<sup>4</sup> D. Case, *Looking for Information: Survey of Research on Information Seeking, Needs, and Behavior* (Amsterdam, New York: Academic Press, 2002).

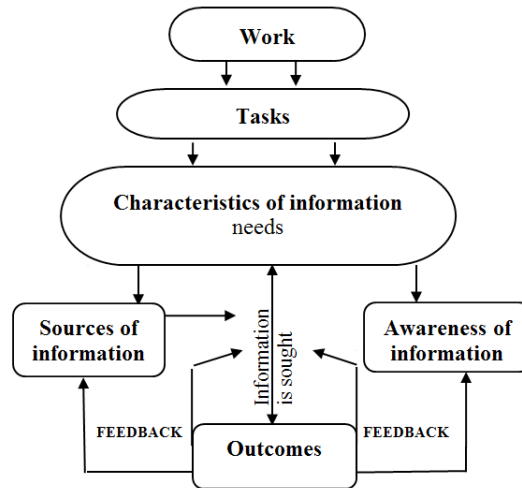


FIGURE 1: THE LECKIE, PETTIGREW, AND SYLVAIN MODEL

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study were

- 1) To find out how the *Ulama* identify and locate information to perform their preaching and counseling roles
- 2) To highlight the search strategies deployed when seeking information to perform the preaching and counseling roles
- 3) To determine the relationship between the demographic factors of the *Ulama* and their information-seeking behavior in relation to their preaching and counseling roles
- 4) To test the Leckie, Pettigrew, and Sylvain Professional Information Searching Strategy Model as a generic model for information-seeking behavior of professionals

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- 1) How do the *Ulama* seek information to perform their preaching and counseling roles?
- 2) What are the strategies employed by the *Ulama* to identify and locate information to perform their preaching and counseling roles?
- 3) Are there relationships between the demographic factors of the *Ulama* and their information searching strategies in the performance of their preaching and counseling roles?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Many studies have been conducted in the area of information-seeking behavior over the last decade. However, for the purposes of literature review and comparison with this study, emphasis was placed on seven major studies (Porcella,<sup>5</sup> Erdel,<sup>6</sup> Tanner,<sup>7</sup> Allen,<sup>8</sup> Wicks,<sup>9</sup> Roland,<sup>10</sup> and Phillips<sup>11</sup>). Furthermore, the literature available on Muslim clerics in Borno relates only to their contribution to Islamic education. Such previous studies include those of Laminu,<sup>12</sup> Ashigar,<sup>13</sup> Abdurraman and Canham,<sup>14</sup> Mustapha,<sup>15</sup> and Gazali.<sup>16</sup> Thus, this study is unique since it intends to look at how the *Ulama* seek information to carry out their preaching and counseling roles.

### *DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS IN INFORMATION-SEEKING BEHAVIOR*

Available literature has shown that information-seeking behavior has been studied in relation to numerous variables. Case<sup>17</sup> observed that although in recent times researchers have turned their attention more to contextual, situational, or role variables, demographic variables such as age, gender, educational background, and experience continue to be of relative influence on information-seeking behavior. Small et al.<sup>18</sup> studied the relationship between demographic and role-related factors in the information-seeking behavior of preK-12 educators emphasizing years of experience and concluded that these educators often rely on familiar routines to find information. This finding

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<sup>5</sup> B. Porcella, "The Information Gathering Habits of the Protestant Ministers of Cedar Rapids, Iowa" (PhD diss., University of Illinois, 1973).

<sup>6</sup> T. Erdel, T., "The Reading Habits of Evangelical Mennonite Ministers" (master's thesis, University of Chicago, 1978).

<sup>7</sup> T. M. Tanner, "The Pastor as Information Professional: an Exploratory Study of How the Ministers of One Midwestern Community Gather and Disseminate Information" (PhD diss., University of Illinois, 1992).

<sup>8</sup> S. J. Allen, "Information-Seeking Patterns and Resource use by Baptist leaders in three Central American Countries (Costa Rica; Guatemala; and Honduras)" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina, 1987).

<sup>9</sup> D. Wicks, "Information-seeking Behavior of Pastoral Clergy: a Study of the Interaction of their Work Worlds and Work Roles" (PhD diss., University of Western Ontario, 1997).

<sup>10</sup> D. Roland, "Interpreting Scripture in Contemporary Times: a Study of a Clergy Member's Sense-making Behavior in Preparing the Sunday Sermon" (PhD diss., Emporia State University, 2008).

<sup>11</sup> R. L. Phillips, "The Relationship between Work Roles and Information-seeking Behavior among Selected Protestant Ministers in Tarrant County, Texas" (PhD diss., University of North Texas, 1992).

<sup>12</sup> H. Z. Laminu, *Scholarship in the History of Borno* (Zaria, Nigeria: The Open Press, 1993).

<sup>13</sup> A. Ashigar, "Malamti Settlement: Some Aspects of their Role in the History of Borno" (bachelor's thesis, Abdullahi Bayero College, 1977).

<sup>14</sup> A. M. Abdurrahman and P. Canham, *The Ink of the Scholar: the Islamic Tradition of Education in Nigeria* (Lagos: Macmillan Press, 1978).

<sup>15</sup> A. Mustapha, "The Contributions of Saifuwa *Ulama* to the Study of Islam C 1087-1846 AD" (PhD diss., Bayero University, 1987).

<sup>16</sup> K. Y. Gazali, *The Kanuri in Diaspora: Contributions of the Ulama of Kanem-Borno to Islamic Education in Nupe and Yoruba Lands* (Lagos: CSS Bookshops, 2005).

<sup>17</sup> Case, *Looking for Information*.

<sup>18</sup> R. Small, S. Sutton, M. Eisenburg, M. Miwa, and C. Urfels, "An Investigation of PreK-12 Educators' Information Needs and Search Behaviors on the Internet," *Proceedings of Selected Research and Development Presentations at the National Convention of the Association for Educational Communications and Technology* (Washington, DC: Association for Educational Communications and Technology, 1998):401-415.

is consistent with earlier studies by Davies<sup>19</sup> and Holland.<sup>20</sup> Wilkins and Leckie found no correlation between information-seeking behavior and length of employment for academic and management staffs of universities. However, the level of education of the respondents is highly significant; “users with master’s degrees and PhD have used the library more frequently.”<sup>21</sup> On the clergy, Wicks,<sup>22</sup> Tanner,<sup>23</sup> and Porcella<sup>24</sup> have all concluded that level of education, years of experience, denomination, and location of clergy impacts not only information-seeking behavior but also pastoral activities such as preaching and counseling.

From the literature, it is clear that relatively few studies specifically address demographic variables as these relate to information-seeking behavior of the clergy. This study contributes to filling this gap.

### *INFORMATION-SEEKING BEHAVIOR OF CLERGY*

Porcella studied information needs as they relate to the preaching role of Protestant ministers in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Although he postulated that a “Protestant minister’s doctrinal belief has a causal relationship to their selection of information materials,”<sup>25</sup> the findings suggest no such relationship between the variables. Erdel surveyed nineteen Evangelical Mennonite Church pastors in America. He found that the pastors made little use of institutional and public libraries, had a personal library, and read mostly religious materials of a conservative nature.<sup>26</sup> Allen<sup>27</sup> investigated information seeking patterns and resource use by Baptist leaders in South America. The study revealed that radio and television were the most widely used channels of information gathering, especially by those with lower incomes and with less desirable work situations, while libraries were used more by urban dwellers with greater leadership responsibilities and higher educational levels. Tanner’s study revealed that pastors seek information through both formal and informal channels. The study also identified two roles of the pastor as information disseminator. As a counselor he deals with a wide range of information needs and uses various strategies to meet those needs. As a preacher, he relies heavily upon Scripture and personal experiences.<sup>28</sup>

Understanding the relationship between work roles and information-seeking behavior of Protestant ministers formed the center of Phillips’ research. The survey study showed relationships between information-seeking behaviors and the choice of both information channel and method of retrieving information. The study also found out that the ministers as preachers preferred a relatively few formal information channels, especially a personal book collection, pamphlet files, and the Bible. They also preferred individualistic or impersonal means or accessing information such as reading a book.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> J. G. Davies, “Leadership: Stepping Ahead of Changing Times,” *The Teaching Librarian* 5 (1987):5-7.

<sup>20</sup> M. P. Holland and C. K. Powell, “A Longitudinal Survey of the Information Seeking and Use Habits of Some Engineers,” *College and Research Libraries* 55 (1995):7-15.

<sup>21</sup> H. L. Wilkins and G. J. Leckie, “University Professional and Managerial Staff: Information Needs and Seeking,” *College and Research Libraries* 58 (1997): 561-574.

<sup>22</sup> Wicks, “Information-seeking Behavior.”

<sup>23</sup> Tanner, “The Pastor as Information Professional.”

<sup>24</sup> Porcella, “Information gathering habits.”

<sup>25</sup> Porcella, “Information gathering habits,” 42.

<sup>26</sup> Erdel, “The Reading Habits of Evangelical Mennonite Ministers.”

<sup>27</sup> Allen, “Information-Seeking Patterns.”

<sup>28</sup> Tanner, “Pastor as Information Professional.”

<sup>29</sup> Phillips, “Relationship Between Work Roles.”

Wicks asked whether the information-seeking behavior of pastoral clergy is governed by the interaction of their work worlds and work roles. The study found that “pastoral clergy tend to use different types of sources in different roles and that certain combinations of pastoral worlds and pastoral roles influence whether the information-seeking behavior will be open or closed.”<sup>30</sup> Roland’s<sup>31</sup> research is a single case study of a clergy member’s behavior in the interpretation of Scripture for the weekly Sunday sermon. Like Wicks, Roland grounded his research in Dervin’s Sense-Making Model which provided the interpretative framework for the qualitative study. Roland’s findings were similar to those of Wick and Allen.

This study is an attempt to compare the information-seeking behavior of the *Ulama* to see if it confirms, contradicts or supplements these studies of Christian clergy.

### *INFORMATION-SEEKING BEHAVIOR AND ROLE PERFORMANCE*

Studying the relationship between the information seeking pattern of the clergy and their work roles, Phillips<sup>32</sup> identified roles for which the clergy require information (preaching and administration) and studied the link between these roles and information-seeking behavior. The study indicated that, although the clergy’s choice of and use for a particular source of information is determined by the role of the moment, there is a general tendency for clergy to rely more on informal sources when performing caregiving and administrative roles while requiring formal resources such as the Bible and other religious publications for performing the preaching role. This agrees with research on the relationship between work roles and information-seeking behavior conducted by others. For example Mick, Lindsey, and Callahan<sup>33</sup> and Summers, Matheson, and Conry<sup>34</sup> concluded that work roles influence the choice of information sources.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### *RESEARCH SETTING*

Borno State is the largest of all the thirty-six States of Nigeria, covering an area of 116,589 square kilometers and occupying the greater part of the Lake Chad Basin in the extreme northeastern part of the country. The state is highly pluralistic in its ethnic composition and has a rich and diverse cultural heritage. It has a population of 4.3 million, 80 percent of which is Muslim.<sup>35</sup> Up to the present, Borno has “remained...the one area in the whole of Nigeria which can be accurately described as a Muslim State with an Islamic dynasty and tradition.”<sup>36</sup> As a center of Islamic scholarship, it attracts many scholars with diverse backgrounds and interests from all over West Africa.

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<sup>30</sup> Wicks, “Information-seeking Behavior,” 205.

<sup>31</sup> Roland “Interpreting Scripture.”

<sup>32</sup> Phillips, “Relationship Between Work Roles.”

<sup>33</sup> C. K. Mick, G. N. Lindsey, and D. Callahan, “Towards Usable User Studies,” *Journal of the American Society for Information Science* 31 (1980): 347-356.

<sup>34</sup> E. G. Summers, J. Matheson, and R. Conry, “The Effect of Personal, Professional, and Psychological Attributes, and Information-seeking Behavior on the Use of Information Sources by Educators,” *Journal of the American Society for Information Science* 34 (1983): 75-85.

<sup>35</sup> Federal Republic of Nigeria, *National Census 2006*. (Abuja: National Population Commission, 2007).

<sup>36</sup> Abdurrahman and Canham, *The Ink of the Scholar*, 36.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

The survey method was used to investigate the information-seeking behavior of the *Ulama* in Borno State. Data was collected using a questionnaire made up of both open-ended and closed-ended items containing numerical, categorical, and multiple response questions. The population for the study was made up of 973 *Ulama*, recognized and registered by the Borno State Ministry for Religious Affairs and Special Education. Robert and Morgan recommend 30 percent derivation for a population of between 950 and 1,000 for sampling.<sup>37</sup> Based on the sampling procedure adopted, questionnaires were administered directly to the respondents, out of which 281 (29 percent of the 973 registered *Ulama* serving as the sampling frame) were properly filled out, returned, and used for the study.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

The analysis consists of both descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics provided an overview of the respondents' characteristic features and the distribution of their responses. Inferential statistics were used to determine relationships between demographic variables and information-seeking behavior.

### DEMOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND OF RESPONDENTS

The demographic background of the respondents is presented in table 1. The greatest number of respondents fell within the 45-54 age group while the lowest number of respondents came from the oldest group specified in the survey, 55 years and above. This indicates that the population of the *Ulama* studied is in its most productive years. The table also reveals that a substantial number of them had gone beyond secondary education and acquired their training both formally and informally.

From the table, it is evident that the sample is a well-educated group, roughly three-fourths of whom have degrees beyond the secondary level. A significant number, slightly over half, have been educated both formally and informally.

## ROLE RELATED SOURCES AND RESOURCES

### INFORMATION SOURCES AND RESOURCES FOR PREACHING

Survey respondents were asked to choose and rank in order of priority from a list of eight items provided for both sources and resources. The respondents identified seven sources and five resources respectively that they usually consulted to perform their preaching role (table 2). The most frequently selected source (wherever ranked) was "Personal Library."

The Council of *Ulama*, a body constituted by government to perform a consultative role on religious matters in the state, was the most frequently selected source in the informal channel category, while the Internet was the least frequently chosen information source for the purposes of preaching.

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<sup>37</sup> V. K. Robert and D. W. Morgan, "Determining Sample Size for Research Activities," *Educational and Psychological Measurement* 30 (1970): 607-610.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION		F	%
Age	25-34	54	19.2
	35-44	93	33.1
	45-54	101	35.9
	55 above	33	11.7
Level of Education	High School	16	5.7
	Diploma	29	10.3
	Bachelor's Degree	102	36.3
	Master's Degree	110	39.3
How acquired	Doctorate Degree	24	8.5
	Formally	107	38.1
	Informally	33	11.7
Years of Experience	Both	141	50.2
	1-5	45	16.0
	6-10	66	23.5
	11-15	36	12.8
	16-19	77	27.4
	20 above	57	20.3

TABLE 1 DEMOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND OF RESPONDENTS (N=281)

PREACHING		F	%
Sources	Personal Library	167 (N=281)	59.4
	Public Library	38 (N=281)	13.5
	Academic Library	78 (N=281)	27.7
	Committee of Ulama	147 (N=281)	52.3
	A Colleague	56 (N=281)	19.9
	Friends and Relatives	27 (N=281)	9.6
	Internet	26 (N=281)	9.3
	Resources	Books	272 (N=281)
Journals		86 (N=281)	30.6
Indexes/Bibliographies		26 (N=281)	9.3
Databases		17 (N=281)	6.0
Audio Visuals		11 (N=281)	3.9

TABLE 2 INFORMATION SOURCES/RESOURCES CONSULTED FOR PREACHING



Books, specifically commentaries on the Qur'an, were regarded as the most valuable resource in performing the preaching role while audiovisual materials were the least preferred resource.

#### *INFORMATION SOURCES AND RESOURCES FOR COUNSELING*

Providing religious counseling is one of the most important roles of the *Ulama* in an Islamic society. Thus, the study enquired as to the information sources and resources consulted by the respondents for the purposes of carrying out their counseling roles. The results of the survey are tabulated below (table 3).

<b>COUNSELING</b>		<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
Sources	Council of Ulama	170 (N=281)	60.5
	Personal Library	156 (N=281)	55.5
	Public Library	40 (N=281)	14.2
	Academic Library	81 (N=281)	28.8
	Internet	84 (N=281)	29.9
	A Colleague	30 (N=281)	10.7
	Friends and Relatives	27 (N=281)	9.6
Resources	Books	252 (N=281)	89.7
	Journals	91 (N=281)	32.4
	Indexes/Bibliographies	37 (N=281)	13.2
	Audio Visuals	17 (N=281)	6.0
	Databases	12 (N=281)	4.3

**TABLE 3** INFORMATION SOURCES/RESOURCES FOR COUNSELING

The highest ranked information source for performing the counseling role was consulting the Council of *Ulama*. Interestingly, the Internet was the third most frequently chosen source behind the Council of *Ulama* and personal libraries and ahead of consulting a colleague, friend, or relative.

With respect to information resources, the traditional print media of books and journals were the overwhelmingly preferred resources. Databases were chosen the least frequently.

#### *INFORMATION SEARCHING STRATEGIES*

A section of the survey questionnaire asked respondents to disclose their information seeking strategies or searching procedures. The questionnaire listed various search strategies or procedures, as appropriate for different information sources or resources and respondents were asked to rank these strategies in order of preference. The results are presented under subheadings below.

##### *SEARCHING STRATEGIES IN LIBRARIES*

Roughly three-fifths of the respondents either go directly to the shelves or search the library catalogue (see table 4). Asking for assistance from a librarian or browsing were more or less equally selected strategies but much less frequently chosen.

Responding to the question what information searching strategy they adopt when seeking for information in either the public or institutional library accessible to them, 108 respondents (38.4 percent), constituting the largest group, indicated that they go straight to the library shelves. Using the library catalogue is the second most favorite search strategy adopted by sixty-five respondents (23.1 percent).

However, fifty (17.8 percent) of the respondents stated that they always ask for the assistance of the librarian or other library staff to guide them. Forty-one respondents (14.6 percent) admitted only to browsing the shelves, while the lowest percentage of respondents stumble onto needed information by chance rather than by a systematic search strategy.

STRATEGY	F	%
Go to shelves	108	38.4
Using the catalogue	65	23.1
Ask librarian	50	17.8
Browse books	41	14.6
Serendipity	17	6.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>281</b>	<b>100%</b>

TABLE 4 RESPONDENTS' SEARCHING STRATEGIES IN LIBRARIES

STRATEGY	F	%
Basic keyword search	140	49.8
Pre-listed menu	77	27.4
Boolean operators	37	13.2
Subject headings	21	7.5
Advance search	6	2.1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>281</b>	<b>100%</b>

TABLE 5 RESPONDENTS' SEARCHING STRATEGIES USING ICT

#### *SEARCHING STRATEGIES USING INFORMAL CHANNELS*

Respondents clearly preferred the simplest, most straightforward means of searching (keyword and menu-guided) while relatively few seemed to be aware of more advanced strategies and techniques (see table 5).

Informal channels of communication are especially important in societies such as Nigeria where most of the culture and tradition is unwritten and transmitted orally from generation to generation. It is therefore no wonder that a cluster of responses was recorded around relationships when respondents were asked to indicate the process of accessing information using the informal channels, as presented in table 6.

STRATEGY	F	%
Council of Ulama	90	32.0
Colleagues	69	24.6
Friends and Relatives	59	21.0
Community Leaders	36	12.8
Conferences/Seminars/Worships	27	9.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>281</b>	<b>100%</b>

TABLE 6 RESPONDENTS' SEARCHING STRATEGIES USING INFORMAL CHANNELS

SEEKING STRATEGY		F	%
Using the Library	Go to Shelves	98	34.9
	Ask librarians	75	26.7
	Use catalogue	54	19.2
	Browse books	46	16.4
	Serendipity	8	2.8
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>N=281</b>	<b>100%</b>
Using CST	Basic keyword search	92	32.7
	Pre-listed menu	75	26.7
	Boolean operators	57	20.3
	Subject heading	49	17.4
	Advance research	11	3.9
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>N=281</b>	<b>100%</b>
Other channels	Council of Ulama	125	44.5
	Colleagues	87	31.0
	Friends/Relatives	35	12.5
	Community Leaders/Elders	21	7.5
	Conf./Sem./Workshops	13	4.6
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>N=281</b>	<b>100%</b>

TABLE 7 RESPONDENTS' SEARCHING STRATEGIES FOR PREACHING

## ROLE RELATED INFORMATION SEARCHING

The next section of the questionnaire explored the question of whether there is a correlation between particular roles and information-seeking behaviors.

### INFORMATION SEARCHING STRATEGIES FOR PREACHING

The questionnaire listed fifteen possible search strategies in connection with the preaching role and a similar list of possible search strategies in connection with the counseling role. These were drawn from the various possible sources and resources mentioned in previous questions. Respondents were asked to select and prioritize five of these. The results for the preaching role are presented in table 7 and the results for the counseling role in table 8.

### INFORMATION SEARCHING STRATEGIES FOR COUNSELING

SEEKING STRATEGY		F	%
Using the Library	Go to Shelves	82	29.2
	Ask librarians	75	26.7
	Browse books	57	20.3
	Use catalogue	43	15.3
	Serendipity	24	8.5
		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>N=281</b>
Using CST	Basic keyword search	86	30.6
	Pre-listed menu	74	26.3
	Boolean operators	52	18.5
	Subject heading	43	15.3
	Advance research	26	9.3
		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>N=281</b>
Other channels	Council of Ulama	98	34.9
	Colleagues	71	25.3
	Friends/Relatives	53	18.9
	Community Leaders/Elders	44	15.7
	Conf./Sem./Workshops	15	5.3
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>N=281</b>	<b>100%</b>

TABLE 8 RESPONDENTS' SEARCHING STRATEGIES FOR COUNSELING

### RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS AND PREACHING-RELATED SOURCES

Demographic information developed from the questionnaire, including age, education, years of experience, and religious affiliation, was correlated with the information sources consulted for the preaching role to answer the question of whether any of these factors significantly influence information-seeking behavior as it pertains to the preaching role.

The result of the analysis<sup>38</sup> generally indicated that there is no relationship between age and preaching-related sources. This indicates that both young and old *Ulama* accessed libraries (especially personal libraries), the Internet, and informal channels for information. However, results further revealed that the older *Ulama* are not inclined to make use of the Internet to gather information to perform a preaching role. The level of education was also found to be positively correlated to the choice of formal sources for preaching. The use of academic libraries and Internet as major sources of information by the respondents who attained higher education is an indication of the level of awareness as well as the acquisition of necessary skills that is lacking in those who are not as well educated. This result is a vindication of the general assumption that the library and indeed the Internet are for the educated elites. Unfortunately, most of the *Ulama*, although educated, either lacked the necessary skills or simply had no access to these facilities. Years spent preaching was also found to have an impact on the choice of sources. Those found to have spent more than twenty years preaching relied more on informal channels to carry out the preaching role. This may be attributed to experience acquired over a long period of performing the preaching role, while those without much experience are perhaps more reliant on formal sources. One could infer that the “new” *Ulama* with little or no practical experience and because of their desire to acquire knowledge and advance in the profession naturally possess a greater need to use the library and the Internet as sources of information more than the more-experienced *Ulama*.

## **RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS AND COUNSELING-RELATED SOURCES**

The same demographic information was correlated with the performance of the counseling role and showed that with respect to age, only the strategy of consulting colleagues was shown to be positively correlated with age. This suggests that the older an Alim gets, the more he seeks the opinions of his colleagues and the less he relies on other sources and strategies.

From the foregoing analysis it could be deduced that the younger *Ulama* tend to rely on formal information sources to perform their counseling roles. The older *Ulama*, however, rely more on their wealth of experience and wisdom to perform the same function. On the relationship between level of education and counseling, the result showed a positive relationship with use of the library and the Internet, and meeting colleagues. The results also suggest that the younger and less-experienced *Ulama* between the ages of 20-35 years actively explore other sources of information more than their older and more-experienced colleagues with respect to the counseling role. On religious affiliation, the results showed no relationships with the choice of sources. However, it played an influential role in the choice and type of information resource used. In other words denominational and sectarian publications were highly preferred and used for the purposes of role execution.

## **DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

### *ROLE-RELATED INFORMATION SOURCES AND RESOURCES*

#### **Preaching Sources and Resources**

Findings from the study indicated that the *Ulama* principally consult the main scripture texts (Qur’an and Hadith) while performing the preaching role. They also preferred print sources from their personal libraries and tended to

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<sup>38</sup> For details of the inferential analysis see A. G. Saleh, “Information-seeking Behavior of *Ulama* in Relation to their Work Roles” (PhD diss., International Islamic University, Malaysia, 2012).

rely more on informal channels such as the Council of *Ulama* or colleagues. The findings were parallel to those of Wicks who stated that:

Repeatedly, in the surveys and interviews the Bible was identified as the first source consulted in both the preacher and care-giving roles. While a dependence on the Bible is to be expected in a Christian Religious setting, reliance on a standard source also serves to simplify the conflicting world of information. Similarly, Pastors in this study preferred to use their personal library over institutionalized libraries.<sup>39</sup>

Similarly, in Islam the Qur'an and Hadith are considered to be not only the primary sources, but the ultimate sources; thus, they are the first choice of the *Ulama* in preaching, a sacred role that is strictly confined to the interpretation of the scriptures without any prejudice of opinion. These are sources that are found easily in all Muslims homes.

### **Counseling Sources and Resources**

On information sources consulted for the counseling role, the study revealed that, when preparing to carry out the counseling role, the *Ulama* preferred informal sources such as conferring with colleagues and consulting the Council of *Ulama*. In terms of resources, the study found that print resources, especially the scriptures and other religious books, were preferred.

This finding agrees with the work of both Huseman<sup>40</sup> and Gorman,<sup>41</sup> who found that while the clergy are prone to use libraries and rely more on the scriptures to gather information to perform the preaching role, they have a propensity not to do so in the counseling and administrative roles. Obviously, knowledge and experience acquired over a long period of practice prepare one for a successful counseling and care-giving role. This was also found to be applicable to the *Ulama* as well.

### *ROLE-RELATED INFORMATION SEEKING PATTERN*

#### **Preaching Related Search Strategies**

Findings from the study established that the *Ulama* deployed various search strategies to obtain information for their preaching role. Although they rely primarily on the Qur'an and Hadith, they gather information for the task by browsing through the Qur'an in search of the relevant chapters and verses and the Hadith to aid in the interpretation. This requires going through their collection, a library, or an informal channel. When using public and institutional libraries they go directly to shelves if they are conversant with the system of arrangement; otherwise, they ask for assistance. However, when using their personal collections, they already know where the materials are so they access them directly and browse through them searching for relevant information. Consultations among colleagues and the council of *Ulama* were also a preferred way of searching for information for preaching.

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<sup>39</sup> Wicks, "Information-seeking Behavior."

<sup>40</sup> D. A. Huseman, "Books, Periodicals and the Pastor," *Drexel Library Quarterly* 6 (1970): 4-26.

<sup>41</sup> G. E. Gorman, "Patterns of Information Seeking and Library Use by Theologians in Seven Adelaide Theological Colleges," *Australian Academic and Research Libraries* 21 (1990): 137-156.

Previous studies in relation to searching strategies adopted by professionals to perform work tasks conducted by Pinelli,<sup>42</sup> Leckie et al.,<sup>43</sup> and Johnson<sup>44</sup> all concurred that professionals used searching strategies they are familiar with and those that were found to be reliable towards solving the task at hand. Thus, like other professionals, *Ulama* search for information to preach using their personal collections or by going directly to the shelves in public and institutional libraries, and when using informal channels they consult with the council of *Ulama* and colleagues. Some important comments made by respondents are presented below.

“I am used to going directly to the shelves especially when I don’t have a particular book in mind. It enables me to check the whole shelf to identify and locate relevant material.”

“Certainly no one can claim to know everything, collaboration and consultations among colleagues is one of the ways we seek information to perform our roles.”

### **Counseling Related Search Strategies**

The study found that the *Ulama* use all information sources (libraries, information and communication technology, and informal channels) to gather information for counseling. While searching in public or institutional libraries, they go to the shelves or ask for assistance from the staff. When using their personal collection, however, they go directly to where they keep the books. Using information and communication technology to search for information for the counseling role, however, requires the *Ulama* to ask for assistance to be put through the search steps which, they reported, was usually the basic keyword search. The study also established that they used informal channels, especially consulting the council of *Ulama*, colleagues, friends, and relatives when they need information to perform a counseling function.

This finding suggests that the clergy regardless of the faith and environment search different sources for information to perform a counseling role, and that they do not solely rely on religious sources but on a combination of both religious and secular materials.

### *INFORMATION SEEKING PATTERN OF THE ULAMA*

#### **Preaching Information Seeking Pattern**

The study has clearly shown that the *Ulama* in Borno need information to perform this role and to update their knowledge. This confirms the findings of Wicks<sup>45</sup> whose work on clergy revealed that they seek for information in order to perform their work roles and the need to be knowledgeable about the scriptures.

On the sources consulted for preaching purposes, the study found out that the *Ulama* relied more on personal libraries and informal channels such as consulting colleagues and the council of *Ulama*. Perhaps the reason for preferring these sources is because they are easily accessible, trustworthy, reliable, and cheap. Findings by Allen,<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> T. E. Pinelli, “The Information Seeking Habits and Practices of Engineers,” *Science and Technology Libraries* 11 (1991): 5-25.

<sup>43</sup> Leckie et al., “Modeling the Information Seeking.”

<sup>44</sup> J. D. Johnson, *Information seeking: an Organizational Dilemma* ( Westport, CT: Quorum Books, 1996).

<sup>45</sup> Wicks, “Information-seeking behavior.”

<sup>46</sup> Allen, “Information-Seeking Patterns.”

Leckie et al.,<sup>47</sup> and Haruna and Mabawonku<sup>48</sup> have all variously concluded that professionals generally rely on their personal libraries and professional colleagues for information to solve a particular task at hand. Thus, the *Ulama* in Borno exhibit the same kinds of information seeking patterns as did the Christian clergy in the studies reviewed. The study has also established the fact that the *Ulama* in Borno were found to depend more on printed information resources, especially books. For preaching purposes they specifically relied on no other book than the Qur'an, Hadith, and commentaries by renowned scholars. Similarities could be seen between this finding and that of Al-suqri<sup>49</sup> and Mehmet<sup>50</sup> who also concurred that professionals tend to depend more on printed resources even where they could access the electronic sources or the Internet. One can say that the *Ulama* in reality prefer to use personal libraries rather than other sources for various reasons. One reason may be that "the libraries (public and institutional) in Nigeria have not progressed positively from the traditional library"<sup>51</sup> mainly due to lack of support from government, poor readership, and general apathy towards libraries and information.

### Counseling Information Seeking Pattern

The study also revealed that the *Ulama* used their personal collections as well as consulted their colleagues, friends, and relatives as the main sources of information for the counseling role. One of the major findings of the study on the counseling role which differs from the findings for the preaching role was the fact that personal experience and knowledge of contemporary counseling techniques were identified as important requirements for effective counseling. Closely associated with the above was the finding regarding resources preferred by the *Ulama* when performing the counseling role. While print resources, most frequently the scriptures, were widely preferred, secular materials on counseling were also found to be used by the *Ulama* when performing the counseling role. This finding has been repeatedly reported by almost all research conducted on information-seeking behavior of the clergy. Phillips established that apart from the preaching role where the use of resources was restricted to scriptures, "Informal channels, that is, those channels not intentionally organized or produced as an information channel, were preferred for information seeking in the administrative role."<sup>52</sup> Thus, the clergy were found to widely utilize other non-religious publications to perform another role, which is the case with the *Ulama* when performing the counseling role.

It can be stated from the above that the information seeking pattern of the *Ulama* while performing the counseling role involved a great variety of information resources cutting across both religious scriptures and secular materials, which requires the *Ulama* to go out of their comfort zone to seek the relevant information for the task at hand. Thus, experience and knowledge of contemporary counseling methods and techniques is of paramount importance for successful counseling.

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<sup>47</sup> Leckie et al., "Modeling the Information Seeking."

<sup>48</sup> I. Haruna and I. Mabawonku, "Information Needs and Seeking Behavior of Legal Practitioners and the Challenges to Law Libraries in Lagos, Nigeria," *International Information and Library Review* 33 (2001): 69-87.

<sup>49</sup> M. Al-Suqri, "Needs and Seeking Behaviour of Social Science Scholars at Sultan Quboos University in Oman: a Mixed Method Approach (PhD diss., University of Indiana, 2007).

<sup>50</sup> M. Demircioglu, "Information-seeking Behavior of Criminal Scene Investigators in the Turkish National Police" (PhD diss., University of North Texas, 2010).

<sup>51</sup> M. A. Kamba, "Seeking Behavior of School Teachers in Rural Areas of Selected States in Nigeria: a Proposed Circular Model" (PhD diss., International Islamic University, Malaysia, 2010): 245.

<sup>52</sup> Phillips, "Relationship between Work Roles," 126.



## CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this study was to investigate how the Muslim clerics in Borno State, Nigeria, seek information to perform the preaching and counseling roles. Four research questions and objectives were developed to guide the study. The survey method was used, employing mainly the quantitative approach to collect data from 281 respondents, selected through proportionate stratified random sampling, from a population of 973 spread across 27 local government areas, covering an area of about 116,589 square kilometers. The results from the analysis conducted using both descriptive and inferential statistical analysis were quite revealing.

The *Ulama* in Borno have diverse backgrounds. Although most of them have acquired at least a first degree, they are grounded in the traditional Islamic system of education (Tsangayya or Madarassa). They are all Sunnis, and a majority of them associate with the Sufi sect. Like any other professional group, the *Ulama* need information to carry out their work roles. Although the study has identified two of the roles (preaching and counseling) played by the *Ulama*, it was observed that they also performed other roles which require information as well. The study has also shown that the *Ulama* were aware of the importance of information towards a successful role performance and therefore often take action to satisfy their information needs.

The study has also revealed that the *Ulama* do not make good use of public and institutional libraries and other information sources such as the Internet and audiovisual sources to perform their roles. Personal libraries and interpersonal channels (colleagues, Council of *Ulama*, friends and relatives) were highly regarded and used as main sources of information by the *Ulama* when carrying out their preaching and counseling roles. In terms of resources, printed materials were preferred to non-print or electronic resources. Books, particularly the scriptures (Qur'an and Hadith) and other religious publications, formed the core choice for information among all respondents. Reasons adduced for the preferences and use for the above information sources and resources commonly rest on accessibility, ease of use, familiarity, trustworthiness, reliability, expense, and availability.

The *Ulama* were also found to have exhibited a variety of information searching skills. When using public and institutional libraries they check the card catalogue, go straight to the shelves, browse through books, or ask for assistance. Furthermore, consulting colleagues, the council of *Ulama*, and friends were the most widely used interpersonal channels. However, although they seldom use electronic media such as the Internet, CD-ROMs, and databases, when they do use them, they identify and locate relevant information by using basic keyword searching or asking for assistance with search procedures.

The statistical analysis used to determine relationships between demographic factors (age, education, years of experience, denominational and sectarian affiliations) of the respondents and their information-seeking behavior generally revealed significant relationships. The results showed only very minimal cases of weak or non-significant relationships between some demographic factors and information seeking. Furthermore, the finding of the study has established that the *Ulama* play different roles but their choice of information sources and resources as well as their search behaviors do not change significantly. They regard their roles as sacred and the sacred scriptures (Qur'an and Hadith) as being "complete," thus covering all the information needed to perform all roles.

Generally, the findings of the study revealed that the information-seeking behavior of the *Ulama* could best be described as linear and procedural along the features of the behavior in the model developed by Leckie, Pettigrew, and Sylvain. The study has recognized the presence of certain peculiarities in information-seeking behavior of professionals in the third world countries, such as poor infrastructure, poverty, lack of skills, and the lackadaisical

attitude of government towards the information industry, among others. However, it indicated that these factors are not significant since the key features in the model were relative to the context of application. This validates the suitability and applicability of the model in all professional contexts in developed and developing countries.

Finally, the foregoing analysis reveals many similarities between the information-seeking behavior of the Christian clergy and the *Ulama*. Both exhibited strict reliance and dependence on information sourced formally from the scriptures to perform the preaching role. However, when performing other roles such as counseling and caregiving, they tend to explore secular information gleaned informally. Again, both Muslim and Christian clergy showed their preferences for print media, especially books, usually from their personal collections or those of their friends and colleagues, and favored informal channels such as consulting with colleagues. However, the two groups differed greatly in their use of electronic media such as Internet, databases, and audiovisual materials. While research conducted on the Christian clergy has been mostly in the western world where access to these technologies is easier, such is not the case with the *Ulama* in Nigeria, a third world country characterized by poor infrastructure, scarce resources, and competing demands, as well as lack of support for the information industry. Coupled with the Islamic tradition of reading rooted in print, the perception of technology as “western,” and the lack of training and skills to use these technologies were perhaps the factors that attributed to the differences in the information-seeking behaviors of the Christian clergy and the *Ulama*.

