



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF APPLIED TECHNOLOGIES IN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

<http://www.jatlim.org>

International Journal of Applied Technologies in Library and Information Management 6 (3) 06 - 47-59

ISSN: (online) 2467 - 8120

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Manuscript Number: JALIM - 2020-06.3/47-59

Information Seeking Behaviour of Elderly Persons in Wudil Local Government Area, Kano State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study was carried out to ascertain the information needs and seeking behaviour of elderly persons in Wudil Local Government Area, Kano State, Nigeria. The research design adopted for the study is a descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprises the elderly persons in Wudil LGA. Fifty respondents were selected via the accidental sampling technique from each of the wards in Wudil LGA, which amounted to 500 respondents used for the study. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire. Out of the 500 copies of the questionnaire distributed to the respondents, the researchers were able to retrieve 468 copies of the questionnaire from the respondents, thus there was a 94% response rate. The method of data analysis adopted was descriptive statistics covering frequency count and percentage displayed on tables for clarity. The findings of the study revealed that the information needs of elderly persons in Wudil LGA were on health/ wellbeing, pension/ finance, covid-19 disease, government policies, among others. The elderly persons rely on family members/ friends, physician/ medical practitioner, age group meetings, radio/ television, traditionalist/ herbalist, among others for their information needs. The elderly persons use the information they get to make informed health decisions, to get sources of finances available for them, to understand government policies, to be committed to all religious obligations, among others. The challenges that militate against the accessibility and use of information by the elderly persons are inadequate funds, locating information required is cumbersome, poor internet searching skills, language barriers, difficulty in interpreting information, among others. It was recommended from the study that the government should pass the information on their policy for the elderly persons via town criers and other interpersonal sources, information should be passed to the elderly persons in their local dialect to eradicate language barriers that may arise, and the government should ensure the pensions and other financial benefits meant for the elderly persons are paid as at when due to enhance their well being and access to information.

Keywords: Information; Seeking Behaviour; Elderly Persons; Wudil Local Government Area; Kano State; Nigeria

1.1 Introduction

The world population is aging and this has a significant impact on the political, economic, and social function of societies irrespective of the region or developmental status. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs [UNDESA] (2015) posits that the number of elderly persons aged 60 years and above makes up to 12.3% of the global population and by 2050 that number will rise to almost 22%. The scenario is not different in Nigeria as the population of the elderly is increasing significantly, as those aged between 65 years and above make up to 3.1% or 5.9 million of the total population (Population Reference Bureau, 2012; National Council on Ageing, 2016). Nigeria has a very poor welfare package for the teaming elderly population as they are left isolated to cater to their every need, this has resulted in much underlining illness facing them with high blood pressure topping the chart. Accessing information that meets the needs of the elderly is another challenge affecting their standard of living and health status.

The historical background of studies on information needs and seeking behaviour dates back to 1948 when Bernal and other researchers presented a paper on scientific information at the Royal Society Conference (Bernal, 1960). Information needs are gaps in knowledge that prompt people to engage in information-seeking activities to fill that gaps and make better decisions in life. Kuhlthau (1993) posits that it is information needs that trigger information seeking which is majorly caused by uncertainty, lack of understanding, and gaps in knowledge. The information needs of people may differ due to a wide variety of factors such as educational status, gender, level of development, age, among others. The concept of Information seeking behaviour involves information needs, information sources available to the seeker, information demand strategy of the seeker,

and the constraints that militate against the access and use of information. Information is crucial for survival, as it plays a significant role in our daily professional and personal lives and we are constantly challenged to take charge of the information that we need for work, fun, and everyday decisions and tasks (Bruce, 2005). According to Edewor, Ijiekhuamhen and Emeka-ukwu (2016), the elderly are mainly inquisitive and this prompts their search for information. They want to know more about their health condition, government policies concerning them, current news/ technologies as well as sources of finance to cater to their wellbeing, etc.

Currently, there is a gap in knowledge on the information needs and seeking behaviour of elderly persons, especially the ones that reside in Wudil Local Government Area, Kano State, Nigeria. This study will provide information on the information needs of the elderly, their preferred sources of information, the use they put the information get, and the challenges that militate against their accessibility and use of information.

1.2 Research Objectives

The main objective of the study is to ascertain the information needs and seeking behaviour of the elderly in Wudil Local Government Area, Kano State, Nigeria. The primary objectives of the study are to:

- * Ascertain the information needs of elderly persons in Wudil Local Government Area, Kano State, Nigeria.
- * Determine the preferred sources of information by elderly persons.
- * Establish the use of information by elderly persons.
- * Find out the challenges that militate against the accessibility and use of information by elderly persons.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

- * What are the information needs of elderly persons in Wudil Local Government Area, Kano State, Nigeria?
- * What are the preferred sources of information by elderly persons?
- * What are the uses of information by elderly persons?
- * What are the challenges that militate against the accessibility and use of information by elderly persons?

1.4 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for the study was anchored on Wilson's Model of Information Behaviour (Wilson, 1999). Wilson's Model of Information Behaviour aimed to outline that various areas covered by what is proposed as information-seeking behaviour as an alternative to the then common information needs. The model postulate that information-seeking behaviour arises as a consequence of a need perceived by an information user, who makes stringent efforts to satisfy that need by making demands via formal or informal information sources or services that result in success or failure to find relevant information that meets their exact need. However, if successful, the individual then makes use of the information found and either fully or partially satisfies the perceived need. On the contrary, if not successful the information user may consult other information sources and begin the search process all over again. The model also suggests that information can be passed from one person to another in the information-seeking process.

The information perceived as useful may also be passed on to other people that may require it to make informed decisions and choices. Relating the Wilson Model of Information Behaviour to the present study,

information-seeking behaviour arises from a need perceived by the elderly persons who are here referred to as an information seeker. To satisfy that need, the elderly seek information from various formal or informal information sources or services which results in success or failure to find relevant information that meets their exact needs. If successful the information obtained can be used for various purposes depending on the needs of the elderly persons, if not successful they can consult other sources and begin the search process all over again. According to the Wilson Model of Information Behaviour, it is normal for the information seeker to encounter some challenges in the information search process. This study will identify the challenges that militate against the accessibility and use of information by elderly persons in Kano State, Nigeria.

2.1 Review of Related Literature

The literature review was done in line with the objectives of the study. Literature was reviewed on the information needs of the elderly persons, the preferred sources of information by the elderly persons, the use of information by the elderly persons, and the challenges that militate against the accessibility and use of information by the elderly persons.

Information Needs of the Elderly Persons

Researchers in the literature currently are concentrating on the information needs of the elderly in advanced nations of the world with only a few corresponding studies from developing nations like Nigeria. Edewor, Ijiekhuamhen, and Emeka-ukwu (2016) studied elderly people and their information needs. The findings revealed that 98% of the respondents indicated they require information on their health, 92% of the respondents indicated information on pension/ finance, 80% of the respondents indicated information on life decisions, 63%

of the respondents indicated transport information, 53% of the respondents indicated information on news/ current happenings, 34% indicated government policies, 29% indicated other information needs. Zou and Zhou (2014) analyzed the information needs of elderly people in a Chinese rural community.

The findings revealed that elderly persons sampled require physiological information; this includes information relating to food, clothing, shelter, action, and care information. This is followed closely by the information that enables them to stay safe; this includes information relating to healthcare, pension policy information, among others. Barrett (2000) studied the information needs of the elderly in the UK. The findings revealed finance and benefits, community care, support services, and practical help at home, and housing as major areas of information needs for the elderly people. Andrewes, Budd, Charles, Huggett, Lawrence, Matthews, Moody, and Norton (2010) studied the information needs of older adults in Eastleigh Southern Parishes' older people's forum. 424 elderly replied to the question, Information about transportation (bus timetables) (225) headed the list and financial abuse (4) came last, while 27 elderly people did not reply.

Preferred Sources of Information by the Elderly Persons

Information can be generated from virtually anywhere; through personal experiences, expert opinions, websites, social media, blogs, books, journal and magazine articles, and newspapers, etc., the kind of information required will change depending on the information need you are trying to meet (Trinity College Library, 2020). Patterson (2007) studied information sources used by older adults for decision making about tourist and travel destinations. The findings of the study revealed that family, neighbours,

magazines, and newspapers were the most important sources for information utilized by older adults. Wick (2004) undertook a literature review on the information-seeking behaviour of the elderly.

The review showed clearly that the seniors rely mainly on interpersonal sources as well as internally print materials for their information needs on participation in community clubs and organizations. The study also revealed that the elderly sought print resources for hobby related information seeking, for answers to medical and financial questions they look primarily to interpersonal sources, which include physicians, pharmacists, other professionals, family members, and friends. Chaudhuri and Le (2013) examined the health information-seeking behaviours of older adults. The findings revealed that the elderly rely on health care providers, pharmacists, friends and relatives, retirement community staff, newspapers, the Internet, television, and the radio for their information needs. Taha, Sharit, Czaja (2009) studied the use of and satisfaction with sources of health information among older internet users and non-users. The findings revealed that those who do not use the Internet were found to be just as satisfied with the health information they find as those who search for information online. It was also revealed that nonusers are more likely to make health care decisions based upon information found offline than internet users who have access to more information.

The use of information by the Elderly Persons

Currently, there is a paucity of studies on the use of information by elderly persons. The use of information may differ from one elderly person to another. The study of Edewor, Ijiekhuamhen, and Emeka-ukwu (2016) on elderly people and their information needs revealed that 97% of the

respondents use information to understand their health better, 92% of the respondents use information to get source of finance, 81% of the respondents indicated they use information to make better life decisions, 71% of the respondents indicated to know how to do things easily, 58% of the respondents indicated to understand a particular situation, 44% of the respondents indicated to know more about government policies, 41% to project future events, among others. Clarke, Moore, Steege, Koopman, Belden, Canfield, Meadows, Elliott, and Kim (2015) studied health information needs, sources, and barriers of primary care patients to achieve patient-centered care: A literature review. The findings revealed that the major purpose of seeking health information was to get information on an illness or medical condition; this is followed by nutrition, and alternative medicines or new/experimental treatment available. Meaning the information received will be used for knowing about illness and medical conditions, get the right nutrition suitable to them, and understand exhaustively alternative medicines or new/experimental treatment available.

The challenges that militate against the accessibility and use of information by the elderly persons

On the challenges that militate against the accessibility and use of information, Eriksson-Backa (2008) studied access to health information: perceptions of barriers among the elderly. The findings revealed that the elderly exhibit feelings of inferiority, lack of time or information, and confusion caused by contradictory information as the barrier that affects their information seeking. Glenton (2002) posited that the bulk of the relevant information on the internet is often published in other languages different from the mother tongue/ language of the seeker, this causes a huge barrier in the information-seeking behaviour of the elderly. Also,

Benson and Forman (2002) revealed from their findings that the elderly people suffering from memory loss may experience some challenges with understanding information that may meet their needs. Ugah (2007) identified lack of awareness; inaccessibility; information explosion; bibliographic obstacles: environment; poor infrastructure; declining budgets and rising costs; information provider attitude toward users; and crime as the barriers to the access and use of information. McCloud, Okechukwu, Sorensen, and Viswanath (2016) studied barriers to the internet among the urban poor. The findings revealed that the respondents still experienced internet connectivity challenges that negatively impacted their health information seeking. Frustration in their search to find information may serve as an additional barrier to those who have medical issues.

3.1 Research Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The study sampled Wudil Local Government Area (LGA), Kano State, Nigeria. Wudil LGA is comprised of ten wards namely Achika, Dagumawa, Dankaza, Darki, Indabo, Kausani, Lajawa, Sabon Gari, Utai, and Wudil. The population of the study comprises the elderly persons in Wudil LG.A. Fifty respondents were selected via the accidental sampling technique from each of the wards in Wudil LGA, which amounted to 500 respondents used for the study. The instrument used to elicit data from the respondents was a structured questionnaire with the aid of 3 research assistants who are proficient in both English and Hausa Language. The research assistants assisted in communicating with the respondents to ensure the data required is elicited from them. Out of the 500 copies of the questionnaire distributed to the respondents, the researchers were able to retrieve 468 copies of the questionnaire from the respondents, thus

there was a 94% response rate. The method of data analysis adopted was descriptive statistics covering frequency count and percentage.

4.1 Research Findings

This section presents the findings of the study based on the demographic description of the respondents and study objectives.

Questionnaire Response Rate

Table 1 revealed the response rate of the questionnaire distributed for the study.

Table 1: Summary of Response Rate according to the Rural Communities in Delta North

Wards in Wudil LGA, Kano State, Nigeria	No. of Questionnaire Administered	No. of Questionnaire Returned	Percentage (%) of Questionnaire Returned
Achika	50	40	8%
Dagumawa	50	50	10%
Dankaza	50	42	8.4%
Darki	50	50	10%
Indabo	50	50	10%
Kausani	50	50	10%
Lajawa	50	40	8%
Sabon Gari	50	46	9.2%
Utai	50	50	10%
Wudil	50	50	10%
TOTAL	500	468	94%

A total of 500 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents and 468(94%) copies were returned and found usable for the study. The response rate of 94% is considered appropriate for the study because the standard response rate for most studies is 60% (Dulle, Minish-Majanja & Cloete, 2010).

From Table 2, it is evident that 270(58%) of the respondents were male, while 198(42%) of the respondents were female.

Occupation Distribution of the Respondents

Table 3: Occupation of the Respondents

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Farming	345	74%
Trading	76	16%
Other Businesses	47	10%
Total	468	100%

Section A: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Gender Distribution of the Respondents

Table 2: Gender of the Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	270	58%
Female	198	42%
Total	468	100%

Table 3 revealed that 345(74%) of the respondents engage in farming, 76(16%) of the respondents engage in trading, and 47(10%) of the respondents engage in other businesses.

Section B: Analysis of the key findings of the study

Ascertain the information needs of the elderly persons in Wudil LGA, Kano State, Nigeria

Table 4: Information needs of the elderly persons in Wudil LGA, Kano State, Nigeria

Information needs of the Elderly Persons	Frequency	Percentage
Information on Health/ Wellbeing	468	100%
Information on the COVID-19 Diseases	434	93%
Information on Government Policies	422	90%
Information on News/ Current Happenings	412	88%
Information on Transportation	387	83%
Information on Business needs	404	86%
Information on Life Decisions	364	78%
Information on Pension/ Finance	468	100%
Information on Diet/ Nutrition	328	70%
Information on Club Activities/ Associations	224	48%
Information on Social Evaluation	248	53%
Information on Religion	402	86%

It is evident from the findings that the elderly persons in Wudil LGA, Kano State have some information needs. From the results in Table 4, it was revealed that information needs of the elderly persons were on Health/ Wellbeing, Pension/ Finance, COVID-19 Disease, Government Policies, News/ Current Happenings, Business needs, Religion, Transportation, Life Decisions, Diet/ Nutrition, Social Evaluation, and Club Activities/ Associations.

Determine the preferred sources of information by elderly persons.

Table 5: Preferred sources of information by elderly persons

Preferred Information Sources	Frequency	Percentage
Family Members/ Friends	468	100%
Physician/ Medical Practitioner	428	91%
Traditionalist/ Herbalist	328	70%
Age Group Meetings	408	87%
Online Sources	34	7%
Books (Both Print/ Electronic)	112	24%
Serials (Both Print/ Electronic)	108	23%
Radio/ Television	402	86%
Other Audiovisual Sources	86	18%
Social Media Sources (Twitter, Facebook, etc.)	64	14%
Religious Leaders (Imam, Pastor, etc.)	314	67%
Traditional Ruler	208	44%
Geographical Tools/ Directories	44	9%
Club/ Association Meetings	34	7%
Other Sources	22	5%

The findings have shown clearly the preferred sources of information of the elderly persons. It is glaring from Table 5 that the preferred information sources by elderly persons are family members/ friends, physician/ medical practitioner, age group meetings, radio/ television, traditionalist/ herbalist, religious leaders, traditional ruler, books (print/ electronic), serials (print/ electronics), other audiovisual sources, social media sources, geographical tools/ directories, online sources, club/ association meetings, and other sources.

Establish the use of information by elderly persons

Table 6: The use of information by elderly persons

Use of Information by the Elderly Persons	Frequency	Percentage
To make Informed Health Decisions	468	100%
To take safety precautions from the COVID -19 Disease	402	86%
To understand government policies	412	88%
To know current news/ happening	386	82%
To make better life decisions	348	74%
To get sources of finances available for the elderly	468	100%
To project future events	324	69%
To know how to do things independently	312	67%
To understand proper business management strategies	286	61%
To make informed transportation decisions	348	82%
To know the nutrition/ diet suitable for the elderly	287	61%
To be committed to all Religious Obligations	404	86%
To live peacefully with family members, Friends, and Neighbours	212	45%
Other Uses	68	15%

From Table 6, it is clear that the elderly persons use the information they get to make informed health decisions, to get sources of finances available for them, to understand government policies, to be committed to all religious obligations, to take safety precautions from the COVID-19 Disease, to know current news/ happening, to make better life decisions, to make informed transportation decisions, to projects future events, to know how to do things independently, To know the nutrition/ diet suitable for the elderly, to understand proper business management strategies, to live peacefully with family members, Friends and Neighbours, and other uses.

Find out the challenges that militate against the accessibility and use of information by the elderly persons

Table 7: Challenges that militate against the accessibility and use of information by the elderly persons

Challenges Statements	Frequency	Percentage
Sickness/ Failing Health	412	88%
Problem of Equity in Material Supply	402	86%
Language Barriers	456	97%
Inadequate Funds	468	100%
Transportation/ Other Movement Challenges	384	82%
Difficulty in Interpreting Information	424	91%
Erratic Power Supply	386	82%
Health Information is Complex Understand	287	61%
Inadequate time to Interact with Family/ Friends	264	56%
Poor Internet Search Skill	458	98%
Poor ICT Skills	344	74%
Locating information required is cumbersome	464	99%
Timidity/ Inability to Speak Out	212	45%
Other Challenges	87	19%

There still exist some challenges that militate against the access and use of information by elderly persons. It is evident from Table 7 that the challenges that militate against the use of information by the elderly persons are inadequate funds, locating information required is cumbersome, poor internet searching skills, language barriers, difficulty in Interpreting Information, sickness/ failing health, the problem of Equity in Material Supply, erratic power supply, transportation/ other movement challenges, poor ICT skills, health information is complex understand, inadequate time to Interact with Family/ Friends, timidity/ inability to Speak Out and other challenges.

5.1 Discussion of the Findings

The study was carried out to explore the information needs and seeking behaviour of the elderly in Wudil Local Government Area, Kano State, Nigeria. The study recorded a 94% response rate which was considered adequate for the study. The data from the

study shows that there were more male respondents than females in the study. The study also revealed that the majority of the respondents engage in farming, this is followed by trading and other businesses.

The information needs of the elderly persons in Wudil LGA, Kano State

It was revealed that the information needs of elderly persons in Wudil LGA were on health/ wellbeing, pension/ finance, covid-19 disease, government policies, news/ current happenings, business needs, religion, transportation, life decisions, diet/ nutrition, social evaluation, and club activities/ associations. This finding agrees with the study of Edewor, Ijiekhuamhen, and Emekakwu (2016) which revealed that the elderly indicated they require information on their health, pension/ finance, and information on life decisions.

The preferred sources of information by elderly persons

It is glaring that the preferred information sources by elderly persons are family members/ friends, physician/ medical practitioner, age group meetings, radio/ television, traditionalist/ herbalist, religious leaders, traditional ruler, books (print/ electronic), serials (print/ electronics), other audiovisual sources, social media sources, geographical tools/ directories, online sources, club/ association meetings, and other sources. This finding agrees with the study of Patterson (2007) which revealed that elderly persons rely on information they get from their family members and neighbours.

The use of information by elderly persons

The elderly persons use the information they get to make informed health decisions, to get sources of finances available for them, to understand government policies, to be committed to all religious obligations, to take safety precautions from the COVID-19 Disease, to know current news/ happening, to make better life decisions, to make informed transportation decisions, to projects future events, to know how to do things independently, To know the nutrition/ diet suitable for the elderly, to understand proper business management strategies, to live peacefully with family members, Friends and Neighbours, and other uses. This finding agrees with the study of Edewor, Ijiekhuamhen, and Emeka-ukwu (2016) which revealed that the elderly use the information they get to understand their health better, to get sources of finance, and to make better life decisions.

Challenges that militate against the accessibility and use of information

The challenges that militate against the access and use of information by the elderly persons are inadequate funds, locating information required is cumbersome, poor internet searching skills, language barriers, difficulty in Interpreting Information,

sickness/ failing health, problem of Equity in Material Supply, erratic power supply, transportation/ other movement challenges, poor ICT skills, health information is complex to understand, inadequate time to interact with Family/ Friends, timidity/ inability to Speak Out and other challenges. This finding disagrees with the study of Eriksson-Backa (2008) which revealed that the elderly exhibit feelings of inferiority, lack of time or information, and confusion caused by contradictory information as the barrier that affects their information seeking. The finding also disagrees with the study of Ugah (2007) which identified lack of awareness; inaccessibility; information explosion; bibliographic obstacles: environment; poor infrastructure; declining budgets and rising costs; information provider attitude toward users; and crime as the barriers to the access and use of information.

Conclusion

The world population is aging rapidly as this has a great impact on every facet of society. The elderly persons like their younger counterparts experience some gaps in their knowledge that prompt them to engage in information-seeking activities. The elderly persons require information on health/ wellbeing, pension/ finance, COVID-19 disease, government policies, news/ current happenings, business needs, religion, transportation, life decisions, diet/ nutrition, social evaluation, and club activities/ associations, among others. To meet their varying information needs, they rely on family members/ friends, physician/ medical practitioner, age group meeting members, radio/ television programmes, traditionalist/ herbalist, religious leaders, traditional ruler, books (print/ electronic), serials (print/ electronics), other audiovisual sources, social media sources, geographical tools/ directories, online sources, club/ association meetings, and other sources.

The elderly persons can either be successful or unsuccessful in their search for information that meets their needs. Once successful, the elderly persons use the information they get to make informed health decisions, to get sources of finances available for them, to understand government policies, to be committed to all religious obligations, to take safety precautions from the COVID-19 Disease, to know current news/ happening, to make better life decisions, to make informed transportation decisions, to projects future events, to know how to do things independently. It worthy to note that some factors can militate against the access and use of information by the elderly persons, some of which includes; inadequate funds, locating information required is cumbersome, poor internet searching skills, language barriers, difficulty in Interpreting Information, sickness/ failing health, problem of Equity in Material Supply, erratic power supply, transportation/ other movement challenges, poor ICT skills, health information are complex understand, among others.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made in line with the findings of the study:

1. Information on health, wellbeing, and finance sources should be frequently made available to the elderly in Wudil Local Government Area, Kano State to keep them informed.
2. Information should be passed to the elderly persons in their local dialect to eradicate language barriers that may arise.
3. Regular training should be conducted on the use of information communication technologies for elderly persons to enable them to access a wide range of information available online.
4. Family members, friends, and those close to the elderly should strive to

communicate with them frequently and pass information to them.

5. The government should pass information on their policy for elderly persons via town criers and other interpersonal sources.
6. Radio and Television stations should showcase more informative programmes that are elderly centered to keep them better informed.
7. The government should ensure the pensions and other financial benefits meant for the elderly persons are paid as at when due to enhance their well being and access to information.
8. Health practitioners should ensure they break down information meant for the elderly to enhance their comprehension and understanding.

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