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Information Seeking Behavior of Clergy: The Research, the Results, and the Future

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the information seeking studies carried out on the professional roles of the clergy, their use of information resources, the place of the Internet in their information seeking behavior, and the studies conducted on the clergy across different religions. Results show significant relationship between clergy's doctrinal position and their information seeking behavior, which changes with work roles of the clergy. The clergy use both formal and informal sources depending on the particular work role they assume. However, not many models of information seeking behavior have been tested in studies of religious professionals. The paper argues that most previous studies of the information seeking behavior of clergy resulted in similar findings because the areas of focus have been limited in scope. Hence, there is a need to look at the issue from different perspectives using diverse methods and contexts in order to broaden the understanding of the clergy and their information seeking habits. The paper points out areas for further research with recommendations of suitable theoretical frameworks, which if applied or tested in information seeking research with religious clergy, may add value to the understanding of this issue.

KEYWORDS: Information seeking behavior; literature review; religious professionals; clergy

INTRODUCTION

Information seeking behavior has received tremendous attention in the field of information science. Studies have been conducted in different settings with different populations to explore and explain how users seek and use information (Brown 929; Weiler 49-51; Dresang 183-91; Case; Large and Beheshti; Kannampallil et al. 2; Abbas et al. 115-16). Despite the extensive research, information seeking in religious sphere remains an understudied area. However, studies are beginning to emerge in order to bridge this gap by concentrating on different aspects of religion, such as information seeking practices of religious professionals.

Religion is integral to the society and we cannot ignore its relevance because it is a worldwide phenomenon. Most religions have people who serve as clergy charged with the responsibility of administering to the adherents. These clergy depend on either religious or secular information to be effective in their ministries and carry out their everyday tasks. They are described as professionals because their job falls within the criteria of the definition of professions as “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” (Leckie, Pettigrew, and Sylvain 162). As professionals, the clergy undergo intense training to make them ready and efficient to render services to their members. Considering how information is invaluable to religion and the numerous clergy all over the world, it is surprising that there are a very few studies that describe how the religious ministers go about seeking for information they use in their services to the people.

This paper examined literature by collating what is documented or known about the clergy’s interaction with information in order to refocus the attention of researchers on this area.

At present, there is no updated comprehensive literature review of this subject-field. The paper argues that most previous studies of the information seeking behavior of clergy resulted in similar findings because the areas of focus have been limited in scope. Hence, there is a need to look at the phenomenon from different perspectives using diverse methods and contexts in order to broaden the understanding of the clergy and their information seeking habits.

The objectives of this paper are to find out the following:

- What studies have been conducted on the information seeking behavior of religious professionals?
- What models and methods of research were employed?
- What findings resulted from these studies?
- What is the future of this research area?

To achieve these goals, the paper reviews the work-related information seeking research carried out on the professional roles of the clergy and their use of information resources, the place of the Internet in their information seeking, and the studies conducted on the clergy across different religions. The paper points out further areas of research with recommendations of suitable theoretical frameworks, which if applied or tested in research with religious clergy, may add value to the understanding of this topic.

This paper provides research frameworks especially for those interested in bridging the gap between information and religion through scholarly enterprise. It is my hope that this paper will be of interest to researchers of information seeking behavior and may drive the need to carry out further research on the information seeking behavior of the clergy from different settings, populations and problems using variety of methods. I hope that the findings of this review may

spur interdisciplinary collaboration between researchers in the field of information science and those from religion and other fields of the humanities.

METHOD

This paper reviews relevant literature on the information seeking behavior of the clergy in relation to general information seeking behavior research. The following electronic databases were used to search for articles: EBSCOhost, ProQuest dissertation and theses, and the online articles from the University of North Texas Library. Other search engines used were Google Scholar and Google. Various search terms were employed in the process of looking for researched studies to include in this paper. Search terms included information seeking behavior, information seeking behavior of clergy, information seeking behavior of religious professionals, information practices of the clergy, information needs and seeking of the clergy, clergy information seeking behavior, and information behavior. Using these different terms returned similar results in most cases. This could be attributed to the limitedness of literature in relation to studies with the clergy. As a result, a decision was made to use all relevant articles retrieved that conducted a study on the information seeking behavior of the clergy regardless of time of publication. Some dissertations could not be retrieved from the online database because they were not available electronically. Hence, they were either ordered through the Inter-library loan (ILL) system or retrieved in hard copy from the library. Other studies on models of information seeking behavior were selected to be included in this review to reflect their suitability for future studies on the information seeking behavior of religious professionals.

REPORT OF FINDINGS

Clergy Work-Roles Information Seeking

Early research on the information seeking behavior of the clergy consisted mostly of dissertations, dating back to the early 1970's. Porcella hypothesized and found that there is a significant relationship between the doctrinal position the clergy hold and their information seeking behavior (6). The resources used by conservative ministers are mostly Bible-based with less concentration on social issues (98). This study set some expectations for what the author described as clergy with conservative or liberal doctrinal position. There seems not to be much clarity from the study on what makes one clergy a conservative and another a liberal. However, the study makes a great contribution in pointing how doctrinal and ideological positions play roles in the way clergy select the information they use.

Allen was the first and one of the very few studies on the information seeking behavior of the clergy that examined clergy outside the developed countries. Allen sought to discover patterns of information seeking by Baptist clergy in three Central American countries. He found that their information use was not different from that found in the United States (230-231). Mass media and books were their primary sources of theological information, while the use of libraries was seen more with those who hold positions of leadership (207-208). Tanner, on the other hand, focused his dissertation on how the clergy transmit information, especially through preaching (269). He found that ministers do not look for information to use only for the here and now, but also for the future (317). He showed that the personality and character of the clergy exert a very significant influence on the kind of information they transmit to the people in sermons (306-308). Phillips in his study confirmed the hypothesis that different roles bring about varying

information seeking habits. His work aimed at bringing out the necessity for studying ministers' information seeking behavior from the point of view of their pastoral and administrative roles.

Wicks extended the findings of Phillips and conducted one of the more prominent studies on the information seeking behavior of religious professionals. He studied pastoral clergy to determine the work worlds and the work roles that guide how they search for information. He operated under the hypotheses that the work roles and work worlds of the clergy determine their information seeking behavior to be either closed or open (212). It is a closed system when the clergy seek information only within their world, and it is an open system when they seek information outside their world; such that when the clergy's world and role are significantly related to one another, their search for information takes place within a closed system. On the other hand, they operate in an open system when work worlds and work roles are not related (208-209). These can be likened to the contextual variables that influence information needs as described by Leckie, Pettigrew and Sylvain (182), which can either be internally or externally prompted. Wicks identified three work worlds for the clergy: theological, denominational and congregational. He also identified three work roles: preacher, caregiver and administrator. While Leckie, Pettigrew, and Sylvain emphasized the relationship between work roles and associated tasks in their model, Wicks introduced the notion of work worlds and work roles.

Wicks used a combination of mail surveys and structured interviews among ministers of six Christian religious groups in Southern Ontario, Canada. These included the United Church of Canada, the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church of Canada, the Presbyterian Church, the Baptist Church and the Pentecostal Church. The mail survey had 378 respondents while interviews were conducted with 20 ministers. The results of Wick's study confirmed his hypothesis that the work worlds and work roles of the clergy influence their information seeking

behavior to take place in either closed or open systems (215-217). Wicks' work seemed to support Chatman ("Theory of Life in the Round" 214) to a certain extent, in that members of a small world do not go outside their boundaries to seek information. Wicks and Chatman had similar findings even though the two studies concentrated on different types of information behavior. While Chatman concentrated on non-work everyday life information seeking ("Theory of Life in the Round"), Wicks demonstrated how the information seeking behavior of clergy is determined by work worlds and work roles, hence, concentrating on work-related information behavior.

Wicks also found that the information seeking process changes depending on what role the clergy assume; that is, the clergy are likely to use different kinds of sources in different work roles. For instance, the work roles are likely to predict when pastors use print or interpersonal sources, while the work worlds predict if these choices are closed or open. His study showed that for preaching and other theological information, pastors relied on books, but they turned to interpersonal sources for information when it came to their administrative roles and local church information. Wicks did not look at other predictors such as age, years of experience or ethnicity. These can also determine choices of sources. Wicks' study was largely dependent on Dervin's sense-making theory (Dervin, "Sense-Making Theory and Practice"; Dervin and Nilan) and some combination of social network theory and role theory. However, his study is limited to particular types of work roles, such as preacher, caregiver and administrator. It is possible that if more roles are identified the results may be different, especially if the clergy of the individual religious denomination under investigation have some roles unique to themselves, such as celibacy and confessor among the Catholic clergy. This presents the need for studying a group from one

religious denomination to see how the results differ or are similar to that of the numerous combinations as done by Wicks.

While Wicks used a sample of ministers from six different Christian denominations, Lambert concentrated only on the information seeking behavior of Baptist ministers. He wanted to find out what causes Baptist ministers to seek information, what sources they use, and what factors determine the level of effort they put into the information seeking process. He also tried to find out the factors that determine when and why the ministers put a stop to the information search process. This is in keeping with Leckie's model (187) on the outcome of the information seeking process, which may indicate that the information need has been met and one has accomplished the task. While Lambert based his inquiry on when the clergy stop the information seeking process, Leckie, Pettigrew and Sylvain (187) proposed a feedback loop where the information seeking process can start again if the need is not met.

Lambert used a multiple-case study design, and interviewed 10 Baptist ministers. He identified three roles for the minister: administrator, preacher and caregiver (8). This is similar to those identified by Wicks, but unlike Wicks, Lambert was not so much concerned about the relationship of the roles to the work worlds; rather, he was more concerned about how the clergy's information seeking behavior changes with different roles. He concentrated more on the administrator's role, which requires the minister to differentiate the administrator's role from their preacher's role. His study found that preparation for sermon was a major reason Baptist ministers seek information and that they make good use of the Internet in addition to other sources. In the administrative role, they use both formal and informal sources, but in the preacher's role, they use more of formal sources like books and Internet publications. Lambert asked the ministers to explain the factors that determine when they stop seeking further

information during a search process. The findings showed that ministers end the search process when they have found the information they need or when they are spending more time in the process than necessary (7-13). This is the only study on the information seeking behavior of the clergy that dealt with factors determining when clergy decide the information seeking process is enough and when experience can influence the effort put into the process.

Curran and Burns, like Lambert, studied one block of the clergy, the Catholic clergy. Their study took the path of Wicks by examining the clergy based on their roles. They, however, went beyond the three roles of preaching, administration and caregiving that were used in previous studies, and examined four more responsibilities: teaching, conducting service or liturgy, counseling and self-development (7). Their findings showed similar patterns with the results of previous studies. They found that Catholic clergy, like other clergy, rely on personal contacts and resources to meet their information needs (9). However, it is my opinion that unique factors such as celibacy, cultural factors and work environments, peculiar to the Catholic clergy, are very important variables that studies of the information seeking behavior of the clergy are yet to examine. Exploring such factors in studies with Catholic clergy may likely yield diverse outcomes from studies with clergy of other denominations.

Roland, on the other hand, looked at clergy's information seeking from the point of view of sermon preparation ("Interpreting Scripture"). He conducted a series of structured and semi-structured interviews with a single clergy member exploring his routine task of sermon preparation using Dervin's sense making theory as framework (2). His reason for using the sense making theory was to discover gaps or problems that confront the clergy when interpreting the scriptures during the course of preparing for sermons (15). He asked the question "how does a clergy member go about choosing a scripture text or topic for the sermon?" (Roland "Interpreting

Scripture” 96). He found that denominational affiliation plays a great role in sermon content and interpretation of the scripture (98). This is further confirmed by another study that found a significant relationship between denominational affiliation and information seeking in the task of sermon preparation (Roland “Information Behavior of Clergy Members” 8-13). These findings are consistent with those of Wicks and Porcella where denominational affiliation played a role in the information seeking process. Roland’s work is similar to that of Tanner, except that while Tanner chose to put sermon topics into categories, Roland looked at the factors that affect the topic selection and the entire sermon preparation.

Roland also found that the lectionary (the book that contains the assigned scripture readings for Church service) and liturgical calendar were the major determinants of what scriptural passage the minister will choose for preaching (96). As Roland himself observed, however, this result will not be generalizable across all clergy because not all denominations use the lectionary or liturgical calendar and his study involved a single informant. This calls for more studies with representative samples of the clergy.

Clergy and the Internet

A few studies looked specifically into the clergy’s use of the Internet for preaching, and the usefulness of the Internet resources for ministry. One of these studies was by Michels, who conducted a micro-ethnographic case study of one Baptist minister in Canada. He applied the sense making theory and collected data through participant observation, archival materials, digital video and audio recording and an interview process (168). His basic concern was to find out the experiences of the clergy in the use of the Internet to prepare for preaching (175).

Michels’ study contradicted Van’s conclusion that protestant ministers use the Internet

uncritically, which has potential negative impact on their sermon preparation. According to Van, when clergy rely chiefly on Internet sources and resources, such as other people's sermons on the Internet, for their own sermons, the real message of the preaching becomes artificial, fake, and adulterated (275). On the contrary, Michels found that Van's assertion was not supported in his study. The respondent in Michels' study said he used the Internet critically and carefully in his devotional and other information seeking processes (175).

Consequently, Michels argued that Van's conclusion was misleading because the minister's voice was absent in the report. According to Michels, Van did not conduct a study with real people based on interviews, surveys of clergy or analysis of how the minister uses information from the Internet for sermons; rather, he based his studies on survey of materials through sites that provided sermons on the Internet (165). Michels, on the other hand, studied only a single minister from a single denomination. This cannot be generalizable as compared to the Many Protestant Christian ministers that Van's study intends to reflect. In what sounds like an agreement with Van, Lambert stressed that though the ministers used Internet resources, they feared the problem of information overload, which makes it somewhat difficult to find what is valid and useful. To make a compelling argument, however, there is need to study a more representative sample of Protestant ministers and possibly among American Protestant ministers in order to test Van's claim. Furthermore, since both Michels' and Van's studies were to determine experiences acquired in the use of Internet resources, the Uses and Gratification Theory will also be an appropriate model to apply in such research.

Another study that looked at the uses of Internet for the clergy's ministry was by Smith and Smith. This study drew from a survey of annotated lists of Web resources to see if a significant number of parish clergy use the Internet for information gathering in their ministry.

This study found that the level of basic computer literacy among the clergy was very high, with about 88% owning a computer, having access to the Internet, and using email (14). They explained that the clergy computer literacy was high because of their high level of education. However, there is no study yet on the information seeking behavior of the clergy that concentrates on education as a factor. Smith and Smith also found that denominational affiliations played a great role in determining the type of information clergy use online (15). This is consistent with other findings on the clergy information seeking behavior (Porcella; Wicks; Roland “Interpreting Scriptures”).

Penner conducted a literature review of the information behavior of theologians. Theology is a required area of study for all clergy. However, she concentrated on those clergy who are academicians and linked them with humanists since theology is one of the disciplines of humanities. This study, in sharp contrast to Smith and Smith, and Lambert, found that the humanists have difficulties in using electronic resources and are not very willing to engage with technology (73). This conclusion may probably be revised if a similar study is replicated today. In addition, such conclusion may not be attributed to all clergy because the literature review by Penner used sources that included studies that were not on clergy who were theologians. Nevertheless, this is an important indication that there is a need to study the information seeking behavior of clergy whose major roles are academicians, and compare the results to those clergy with pastoral roles and see the differences and similarities of their information seeking behavior, especially the role of individual settings in information seeking. This need is further shown by an earlier study that found theologians to be uninterested in sophisticated library services (Gorman 155), which may not necessarily hold true for every setting.

A study of elite religious professionals involved in ministry (Park and Taylor), drew a sharp contrast from Penner. Park and Taylor found that clergy access the Internet more than do the general population. The study found gender and race as factors that could influence how clergy seek information. Nonwhite clergy were more likely to seek information through the television than white clergy, while female clergy are more likely to use variety of information sources than male. On the use of books and periodicals, nonwhite and female clergy read fewer genres of periodicals and books than do their white and male counterparts (234-235). This is one study that examined differences in information seeking behavior of the clergy based on gender and race. The study was based on elite clergy, but the authors' description of what constitutes 'elite' is a subject of debate. However, this poses the need to study the information seeking of clergy by examining a variety of factors.

All the aforementioned studies on the religious professionals concentrated on the information seeking behavior of Christian clergy; only a very few studies looked at another religion.

Information Seeking of Islamic Clerics

Islam is a religion that enjoys a huge following globally, but as observed by Bakar and Saleh "Meeting the Information Needs", there are no comprehensive Islamic databases, nor are there suitable information retrieval systems (IRS) that produce search terms common to Islamic patterns largely derived from the Arabic language (E-29). Bakar and Saleh "A Survey of Information Resources" conducted the first study on the information behavior of Islamic clerics. They surveyed what information resources the ulamas (the name for Islamic scholars and clergy) need in order to perform their work roles. The study investigated 31 Muslim clerics in Borno

State, Nigeria, to find what type of information sources they prefer to use and why they use those sources. The results showed that the ulamas need information to fulfil their responsibilities well and that they relied on their Holy books and personal libraries as their sources of information. Similar to the findings of Wicks, the role played by the ulamas determines what information resources to use. Like their Christian counterparts, the ulamas widely use their personal libraries as channel for information gathering, and sometimes consult informal sources such as friends, family members, and colleagues. This study was a great landmark, considering the fact that it was the first to look at the information seeking behavior of clergy from any religion in the countries of Africa. Following Bakar and Saleh, other studies on the information seeking behavior of Islamic clerics continue to emerge in Africa. Saleh and Sadiq studied how denominational affiliations influence the information seeking behavior of Islamic clerics (“Influence of Denominational Affiliations”). The study found that denominational and sectarian affiliations do not influence how ulamas seek information (86). However, the ulamas’ interpretation of Islam, based on their individual sects and beliefs, affects how they preach and carry out their work roles.

Looking further into the information seeking behavior of ulamas, Saleh and Bakar found that in their counseling roles, the ulamas not only use the Qur’an, but also other secular resources. In another study, Saleh and Sadiq found that the ulamas use different search strategies in their information seeking process when using the library, informal channels or information and communications technologies (ICT) (“Information Needs and Seeking”). One similarity in all the studies on Islamic clerics, apart from the fact they were conducted with clergy from one state in Nigeria, is the use of survey method. Going beyond survey and conducting a qualitative study with a more applicable model will help us know the information seeking habit of clerics in

Africa in greater depth. It may be interesting to draw relationships between the information seeking behavior of the Islamic clerics and those of the Christian clergy from the same geographical location. To this moment, such relationships cannot be established due to the absence of studies on the information seeking behavior of Christian clergy in Africa.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

This review reveals gaps in the literature that need some attention and further research. This is particularly so because most of the studies documented on the information seeking behaviour of clergy result in similar findings. This could be attributed to the limited scope of research questions and repetition of methodologies and theoretical frameworks used from one study to another. This limitation points to a need to widen the scope of research in this area. Such can be achieved through examining past works in order to shape future line of research, which are the objectives of this paper.

Considering the large number of adherents to Catholicism and given the number of Catholic clergy all over the world, it is surprising that there are a very few studies in the literature that describe how these religious professionals go about seeking information they use in their services to their people. With the exception of Wicks, who used the Catholic clergy as part of a larger sample of six other denominations, and Curran and Burns, who presented a study on the methodology for studying the information seeking of Catholic clergy, no study has focused mainly on exploring the information seeking behavior of the Catholic clergy. The Catholic Church is the largest single Christian denomination with over 1.2 billion adherents and over four hundred thousand clergy globally (*CARA Statistics*). Having a study describing how

the Catholic clergy seek information will help libraries and Internet content developers to design and organize information in a system that targets this population.

Leckie's model stated that a number of variables such as demographics could influence information needs (182). With the exception of Saleh and Sadiq, who included years of experience as a variable ("Information Needs and Seeking" 63), none of the studies in this review looked particularly on how age, years of experience in the ministry, ethnicity or geographic location influence the information needs and determine the sources of information the clergy use. One study (Lambert) brought out some indications of how experience can be a factor that influences efforts put into the information seeking process but did not discuss the subject in depth. Experience in the ministry or geographical location can be standalone variables in discussing the information seeking process of the clergy.

Religion is a very strong institution in Africa with a high growth of those choosing to adopt the clerical life. It is however unfortunate that only a few studies examined the information seeking behavior of clergy in one part of Africa. These studies only focused on Islamic clerics and used a survey method borrowing the design instrument used by Wicks but did not engage in the kind of in-depth interview conducted by Wicks. There is need for further studies in that part of the world that is culturally diverse. Contextual variables such as specific situational needs can be tested using an effective qualitative or a mixed method to find how these factors influence clergy information seeking. The divide between the rich and poor is very visible in Africa, and much more glaring than in the developed world. It may be an interesting outcome to see how all these factors play roles in the clergy's information search and use. Further studies in this part of the world may also investigate if the information seeking behaviors of clergy differ by ethnicity or geographic location. This is the kind of condition where the application of Leckie's model in

its entirety will be most appropriate, especially in trying to determine what creates or determines awareness of information.

Furthermore, while there are some studies conducted on Christian clergy and a database for Christian theology on a universal stage, this is missing for Islam. There is need for more studies on the general information seeking of Islamic clerics on a global level that will enable information professionals build a database that can serve the needs of the ulamas.

The debate between Michels and Van on whether or not clergy's reliance on the Internet sources for sermons, which are mostly other people's posted sermons, makes the message of their preaching artificial, raises a question that deserves further attention. There should be a concrete study investigating the personal input of the ministers to sermon preparation outside what they read from others' sermon on the Internet. This could be achieved through a blended method borrowed from both Michel and Van. Like Van, there should be a carefully carried out content analysis of clergy sermons on the Internet, and primary research that involves more samples of the ministers. On the other hand, like Michel, there should be an extensive research process utilizing in-depth or semi-structured interview, or mixed methods.

Research models for information seeking are numerous (Wilson; Krikelas; Bates; Kuhlthau; Ellis; Choo, Detlor, and Turnbull). However, not many models of information seeking have been tested in studies of religious professionals. In particular, Leckie's model (Leckie, Pettigrew and Sylvain) and Dervin's sense making (Dervin, *An Overview of Sense-Making Research*; Dervin, "From the Mind's Eye"; Dervin, "Chaos, Order and Sense-Making") have been repeatedly used in a few studies mentioned in this review. There are more suitable theoretical frameworks of information seeking research that are yet to be explored in the study of the information seeking behavior of the clergy. Taylor's information use environment (IUE)

(Taylor, *Value-Added Processes* 34-46; Taylor, "Information Use Environments" 219-31) and Chatman's small world theories (Chatman, "Theory of Life in the Round" 211-15; Chatman, "Life in a Small World" 438-42; Chatman, "The Impoverished Life-World" 197-201) are models that could offer more explanation and enhance understanding of the life of the clergy as a group in relation to how they seek information. Such theories will advance understanding of how the clergy seek and use information in their particular context, such as culture, geographical location or way of life.

The clergy vary in composition and system of training depending on individual religious denomination. Geographical location and the cultural background of the clergy could affect the way they approach information seeking. Would a Catholic Priest, for instance, who practices celibacy behave differently from married clergy in seeking information? Would there be variations in the information seeking behavior of clergy from developing countries, such as Africa and their western counterparts due to effect of culture and geographical location? Would the African culture, with its characteristic value for marriage and procreation, be a factor for the African Catholic clergy as against their Western counterparts? What are the effects of social norms held by particular denominational clergy group on their information seeking behavior? Models such as Taylor's IUE and Chatman's small world could offer adequate theoretical frameworks to answer these and many questions, and to study clergy information seeking in various contexts.

The studies on the information seeking behavior of the clergy have largely concentrated on work-related information seeking such as their different pastoral roles. The clergy can be studied from the perspective of their everyday life, investigating their hobbies, time spent in leisure and the nature of their consumption of goods and services, etc. Savolainen's model of the

everyday life information seeking (ELIS) based on the ‘way of life’ and ‘mastery of life’ (Savolainen 260-72) can be a suitable model in studying the non-work information seeking behavior of the clergy.

A variety of research methods such as quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods should be used in the study of the clergy. Clergy can be a closed group that may be difficult to penetrate in order to get desired data, especially in qualitative studies that involve interviewing process. Some studies have reported the difficulties encountered in the process of deriving data from clergy during interviews by non-clergy researchers (Curran and Burns 7), while other studies expressed the ease with which the researcher who is a member of the clergy got detailed information from a clerical respondent (Roland, “Interpreting Scriptures”). The insider perspective is an important element that may open the door for more receptivity in research with the clergy. Where insiders get involved in research with their likes, it gives depth and breadth to the understanding of the informant’s world (Roland and Wicks 262-263). Several researchers have supported such an insider perspective (Bartunek and Louis; Thorne and Paterson 16-21; Kanuha 421-29; Carey, McKechnie, and McKenzie 321; Asselin 99-101; Dwyer and Buckle 56). They argued that when a researcher shares some characteristics with informants it increases openness and acceptance. Hence, the call should be for researchers who are clergy to be more involved in studies with clergy or collaborate with non-clergy to undertake such studies. As insiders, they will derive rich data from the clergy who may be more open in discussion with a fellow cleric.

CONCLUSION

This paper reveals findings on the information seeking behavior of clergy despite the limitedness of the literature. Three work worlds: theological, denominational and congregational; and three work roles: preacher, caregiver and administrative were identified for the clergy. Work roles and work worlds of the clergy influenced their information seeking behavior to be either closed or open. Information seeking behavior of the clergy changes with roles and they use formal and informal sources depending on the particular role they assume. In fulfilling their roles as preacher, caregiver and administrator, the clergy seek information, and stop the information seeking process when they find the needed information or when the process is taking longer time than necessary. A significant relationship was found between clergy's doctrinal position and their information seeking behaviour, and it was revealed that the clergy are increasingly using the Internet resources for their ministries.

On the information seeking behavior of Islamic clerics, it was found that the ulamas need information to fulfil their responsibilities and they relied strongly on their Holy Book and personal sources for information. However, comprehensive Islamic database that will meet the information need of the Islamic cleric is lacking. The result of this review shows that some domains are yet to be explored in this research area. Only few studies looked at clergy information seeking behavior outside the developed world, and there is no study on the information seeking behavior of Christian clergy in Africa. Various research methods should be used and various theoretical frameworks should be applied in studies of the information seeking behavior of clergy in order to understand and explain the behavior of religious professionals as they seek information in both work and non-work related activities.

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