

UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES
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TITLE:

**THE INFORMATION-SEEKING BEHAVIOUR OF ECONOMICALLY
DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES: A CASE STUDY OF THE AMSTERDAM
COMMUNITY IN THE MPUMALANGA
PROVINCE OF SOUTH AFRICA**



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ABSTRACT

This study examined the information – seeking behaviour of members of the economically disadvantaged community of Amsterdam. The study involved both a qualitative and quantitative investigation of the critical factors that affected information – seeking, need, and use in the Amsterdam community. The research design included a study of various information behaviour models with particular emphasis on Wilson's 1996 general model of information – seeking behaviour. The three factors identified by Wilson for the study of various groups' information behaviour were personality, work – related or work – role and environmental factors. Information science researchers, in the study of rural communities' information behaviour, have used these three factors extensively. The data collection was triangulated with the use of survey, observations, and focus group discussions and in – depth interviews. The findings show how the person, in the context of information – seeking and the role-played within a given environment, could determine information needs and use. A person in the context of information – seeking, could be a father, a mother, a group leader, a nurse or a teacher. The main elements are the situation within which a need for information arises, and the person performing a role in an environment situated within the context of information – seeking. Information was found to be a critical commodity for the socio – economic, political, and educational development of any given community. Recommendations were made that could transform the community of Amsterdam, through the provision of sustainable information.

Keywords: Economically disadvantaged, Rural community, Information – seeking, Information – seeking behaviour, Information need, Information use, Amsterdam

List of abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
CI	Community information
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
IFLA	International Federation of Library Associations
NGO	Non – government organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co – operation and Development
TAC	Treatment Action Campaign
UNISA	University of South Africa

SUPERVISOR'S CONFIRMATION

I confirm that the thesis of the following candidate is supervised by me and has been submitted with my authorisation.

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DEDICATION

I want to thank our father in heaven, Jesus Christ for making my dream come true. Thank you God. This thesis is dedicated to my late father, Ukaobasi Obi, who inculcated the principles of hard work and confidence in all of us. I also want to dedicate this thesis to the entire Ukaobasi Obi family. My two late eldest sisters, Irogalachi Nwabara and Akwaguwa Obi, May the good Lord continue to grant you eternal rest. My mother, Mrs Mary Nwakakwa Obi, the one person that has always been there for me and for the immense discipline she instilled in me. My three elder brothers, Prof. Ajuruchukwu Obi, Mr Obiesie Obi and Uwakwe Chikwerem Obi. I am dedicating this thesis to my lovely wife, Chinenye Constance Obi, my love and my statistician. In addition, I will not also forget to thank my brother and good friend, Athan Egbogu.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank my supervisor, Prof. Ezra Ondari – Okemwa, for supporting me all through in the project. You are an excellent mentor and instructor. The thesis would have been possible without you. Thank you again for your immense contributions.

I am also grateful to my eldest brother, Prof. Ajuruchukwu Obi for his immense experiences and support. Thank you for sharing your vast research experiences with me from the beginning to the end.

I will also use this opportunity to thank the people of Amsterdam for their support during my data – gathering in the community. I have always enjoyed that status of a local in your midst and I appreciate them all. I was well received all through the data – gathering sessions. The villagers were very wonderful, I appreciate.

My thanks must go to the Assistant – Librarian in Amsterdam Library, Ms Rebecca Nkambule, for supporting my research even at the point of sickness then. Thank you so much for that sacrifice.

My acknowledgement and appreciation must also go to my two friends at the Municipality, Mr. S.W Mngomezulu, who is the senior manager satellite offices, and Mr. Bafana Vincent Masina for their overwhelming support. I am not also forgetting my assistant researcher, Mbalizethu Ndlovu, for her immense energy, we collected half of the data without any means of transport and yet you remained composed and a source of encouragement to me. Thank you Mbali for your contributions. All of you mentioned and those too numerous to mention, I owe the success of this project to you. May the good Lord continue to bless all of you abundantly.

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CHAPTER ONE

1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction and background to the study

This study focused on the factors that shape the information-seeking behaviour of the members of the economically disadvantaged community of Amsterdam in the Mpumalanga province of South Africa. The study investigated the information – seeking behaviour of the Amsterdam community. It categorized, and distinguished those factors that affected their information – seeking, need and use. The current state of information in Amsterdam and the problems the community members encounter as a result of the lack of sustainable information were explored. The study was conducted in the rural community of Amsterdam. Amsterdam is a rural town in Mkhondo Local Municipality, and is surrounded by other smaller rural villages and rural farm dwellers in the Mpumalanga Province. This province is located to the East of Johannesburg and is one of the smaller South African Provinces, with approximately four million people. More than 60 percent of the people of Mpumalanga live in rural areas and about 36 percent of the economically active population in the province is unemployed. Poverty is prominent with high unemployment and a large population lacking basic utilities and subject to multiple health problems (Kgosiemang and Oladele, 2012:21). Amsterdam, the study population, has a high rate of unemployed, and is largely dependent on social grants and other poverty alleviation programmes for survival. The community members are, mostly, people with low levels of literacy. These people battle for survival in their daily need for information for problem – solving and to facilitate their active participation as responsible citizens of the community.

According to Akparobore (2011:1), the uneducated, the underdevelopment, and the poor must be mobilized to build a society that is self – sufficient. The socially and economically disadvantaged have potential that is yet untapped and should, therefore,

be supported to develop to their full potential. This will not only benefit them, but the society in general. The ability of the individual to contribute to the development of the country lies in his ability to read and write. There cannot be meaningful development in modern society where the majority of the populace is illiterate and unable to access basic information.

Gould, Gomez and Camacho (2010:6) suggest that informed decisions are not possible in the absence of the necessary and relevant information. Rural neglect brings negative consequences such as the exodus of rural dwellers to urban areas, with the concomitant problems of unemployment, crime, prostitution, child labour, spread of diseases, and overstretching of the facilities and infrastructure in the urban areas (Harande, 2009: 1). Harande, therefore, reiterated that development can only be effective if rural dwellers have access to the relevant, diverse information for their activities

The information environment of the economically disadvantaged community is distinct from that of the urban environment. According to Unagha and Ibenne (2011:1), people with low economic power, illiterates, semi-illiterates, school dropouts, etc mostly inhabit the rural areas. Such people have limited or no access to social amenities, including agencies for information dissemination. Lay (2006:320) concurs with the above submissions when he states that poverty is more common and widespread in rural American communities.

It is generally accepted that information is a very important component required to drive development processes in rural areas and as a tool for empowerment and for making sound decisions (Kamba; 2009; Zaid and Popoola;2010; Unagha and Ibenne,2011)

The hardships rural - based communities encounter everyday include limited access to land, infertile soil, adverse weather conditions, the lack of fertilizer and other inputs, deficiencies of transport and marketing, and over exploitation of common resources such as fish, pastureland and forests (Narayan, 1999: 45) . These circumstances within the rural setting condition the information – seeking behaviour of the people. They are

not, in fact, homogeneous as far as information practices are concerned. For example, a large number of rural dwellers are illiterate or only functionally literate. They depend predominantly on oral communication and indigenous knowledge systems (Courtright, 2007: 290; Meyer, 2009: 4).

Obi and Ndhleve (2011:87) agree that “progress in eliminating poverty and inequality remain elusive in South Africa”. Both urban and rural areas of South Africa have continued to attract considerable policy and academic interest in the post – apartheid era, as programmes established to redress past wrongs fail to produce the desired results, revealing research findings of what may sometimes be considered shockingly high levels of poverty, high levels of inequality and in most cases poor standards of living in various areas of South Africa.” The World Bank (2006), (as cited in Obi and Ndhleve, 2011: 87), reports that, in spite of the strong inequality addressing policies, South Africa still remains one of the countries with the highest income inequalities.

This is supported by the economic transformation committee discussion document of the African National Congress (ANC) (ANC, 2007: 1), which points out that, “the challenges of urban poverty and migration to cities are inseparably bound with the struggle to defeat poverty, create work, and build a better life in rural South Africa. The poorest amongst the urban population have the strongest connections with rural areas. Limited opportunities of sustainable livelihoods in rural areas, insecurity of tenure and widespread evictions contribute directly to the growth of informal settlements in cities and towns. Moreover, the predominance of capital intensive farming on vast tracts of land in ‘white’ South Africa is directly linked to the reproduction of high population densities and land degradation in the former Bantustan areas.” In the discussion document, the ANC also points out that many rural areas continue to lack basic infrastructure such as roads, water, and electricity supply. The ANC concurred that the absence of infrastructure entrenches the problems of chronic poverty and limits the potential of communities to sustain economic growth, rural livelihoods and social development. It was also generally accepted in the discussion document, that “our efforts to extend free basic services to all our people are slowest to reach the rural

areas and farm – dwellers, even while the majority have access to free basic services in the urban areas. Moreover, access to government services such as education and health care are the weakest in rural areas.”

However, the ability of information to transform the lives of rural communities has been demonstrated in some countries such as Malawi , Tanzania and Botswana (Mchombu, 2004: 8 – 19).Through his study, Mchombu found that Information provision to rural communities contributed to employment, an improved management of land and water resources and an awareness of how the most prevalent diseases spread. Meyer (2009: 8 - 9), from her study in Phokoane in the Limpopo Province, also found that the lives of rural people could be greatly improved when effective information is provided in a format that the indigenous people are familiar with.

Several studies have been carried out by other researchers with the same encouraging results that show the importance of information to rural dwellers, Ikoja – Odongo and Ocholla (2004: 59), Byamugisha et al (2008: 1). The researchers see information dissemination as part of social mobilization and empowerment.

This study considers information-seeking as a process by which members of the economically disadvantaged community of Amsterdam in Mpumalanga Province of South Africa looks for information that bridges the gap between information needs and their sources. The study therefore deals with the contextual factors within the community, which may influence their information–seeking behaviour. The factors identified for this study are, personality, work–related and environmental factors that are present and are capable of conditioning the community’s information-seeking behaviour (Wilson, 2002:52). This study was carried out in Amsterdam, in the Mpumalanga Province of South Africa.

Information was viewed as a crucial factor in national development, and the ability to use information tools was considered a source of power (Malekabadizadeh, Shokrane and Hosseini, 2009:1 - 3). This opinion was supported by Harande (2009: 1), who

viewed information as raw material for development for both urban and rural dwellers. Harande also held the opinion that the prosperity, progress, and development of any nation depended upon the nation's ability to acquire, produce, access, and use pertinent information. Access to information and advice was seen as a key resource for local people in maintaining active and independent lives.

Wilson (2002:53) defines information seeking-behaviour as "the purposive seeking for information as a consequence of a need to satisfy some goal." According Wilson, "in the course of seeking, the individual may interact with manual information systems (such as a newspaper or a library), or with computer-based systems (such as the World Wide Web)." Case (2002), describes information-seeking as "a conscious effort to acquire information in response to a need or a gap in one's knowledge."

Information seeking is a process in which human beings purposefully engage, in order to change their state of knowledge (Zach, 2005:24). Zach stresses that "while expanding knowledge for its own sake may be an ideal, in reality individuals often look for information only to achieve a practical goal"

Numerous studies have shown that personality, work-related and environmental factors have great influence on rural communities' information seeking behaviour (Wilson ,2002; Gould, Gomez and Camach.2010); (Byamugisha *et al.* 2008). The personality factors include the individual demographics of the information seeker, such as gender, ethnicity, age, and education, as well as their experiences. Education has been found to be an important indicator of a person's ability to access information, especially in the rural areas where the production of locally relevant content, local languages and the lack of capacity for learning new technologies, have not received favorable attention or been considered a problem that needed urgent solution (Gould, Gomez and Camacho, 2010:4).

From this background, therefore, there was a need to identify factors that influenced the information-seeking behaviour of the economically disadvantaged community of Amsterdam in Mpumalanga province of South Africa.

1.2 Background information on the Amsterdam community

An introductory study on information – seeking behaviour of economically disadvantaged communities showed that, even when circumstances and characteristics of communities differ in some ways, the levels of poverty, the high illiteracy rate, and the general underdevelopment of most rural areas appear to be the same. A study of the “factors affecting farmers’ participation in agricultural projects in the Mkhondo Municipality of the Mpumalanga Province of South Africa”, conducted by Kgosiemang and Oladele (2012:21) stated that more than 60% of the people of Mpumalanga lived in rural areas and that about 36% of the economically active population in the province was unemployed. Kgosiemang and Oladele pointed out that for many, maintaining even a subsistence – level lifestyle was a daily concern.

Amsterdam is a semi – rural, laid-back town in the Mkhondo Municipality in the the Highveld of the Mpumalanga Province, with a population of 14059. Amsterdam has the enviable position of being the only small rural town in the country, which is surrounded by three dams: the Jericho dam, the Westoe dam, and the Morgenstod dam. It lies at the intersection of two main routes – the R66, which is the shortest connection to Johannesburg and the R33, which is a provincial road connecting KwaZulu Natal with the Kruger National Park in Nelspruit. It covers an area of about 8-13Km. Amsterdam is about 77 km East of Ermelo. The town lies close to the border with Swaziland, with Carolina to the North and Piet Retief to the South East. Piet Retief is the main seat of government for the Mkhondo Local Municipality.

Amsterdam has a mini bank, a postal agency, a police station, and mini shops and other smaller retail businesses . The hub of activity for the area is in Amsterdam, as the surrounding villages and farm dwellers normally come to the town for their monthly purchases. The town has telephone services and referral offices of some of the departments that operate from Piet Retief. It has a magistrate’s court and a clinic, which is rather far from the surrounding villages. It therefore, means that each service user in the community and the surrounding villages must have transport to access these service points. There are two clinics that are privately- owned by doctors who live in Piet Retief.

Amsterdam lies in the heartland of a large timber plantation of gum, pine and wattle trees. This plantation provides the bulk of unskilled employment to the community. Most people in Amsterdam either work in the forestry industry or are engaged in stock farming. There is a high level of unemployment and most people who are unable to start their own businesses or be assimilated into the small workforce are forced into migrant labour. The illiteracy level is also very high. There are many primary schools, two combined schools, and two secondary schools. Unfortunately, most of these schools are concentrated in Amsterdam thereby making them inaccessible to neighbouring villages in the community. The only small community library built during the apartheid era is about 25km away from Stafford in the East and 26km from the Jericho dam in the West of Amsterdam. There is no school library in any of the schools. The three major sources of formal information are the municipal offices, the Government Departments in the community, and the radio. Life in the deep rural villages surrounding Amsterdam is characterized by a total lack of electricity, water, better roads, and even shops (Main IDP Document Analysis Phase for Mkhondo 2011- 2016).

1.3 Research problem

The literature on the study of information – seeking behaviour of economically disadvantaged communities has shown that urban and rural people who are without access to information, lagged behind in every aspect of human development. Information is a crucial factor in human development; hence, it is a basic human need. The problems that result from the lack of information are made worse in rural communities where people are geographically isolated from urban centers and where some semblance of development does exist because of the provision of information. Jiyane (2002:28) pointed out that, because rural areas are sparsely populated and people farm or depended on natural resources, the inhabitants of these rural communities have basic, but varying need for information. In Amsterdam, most people either worked in the forestry industry or were engaged in livestock farming. The rest were without any visible means of livelihood. The residents of deep rural Amsterdam

were the most disadvantaged. There were no economic activities undertaken by locals, which were capable of sustaining community members. This, on its own, suggested a lack of business information for small-scale businesses and for any sustainable development. The unemployment rate was as high as 31%. The discouraged work seekers, that is, those who were so frustrated that they had stopped looking for work or employment were estimated at 13%. Those who did not have any means of earning a monthly income were estimated at 56% according to (Statistics South Africa 2011 Census Data).

This level of poverty has created a need for community members to look outside the community for jobs as migrant labourers. The illiteracy level was also very high. For example, the illiteracy rate of those between the ages of 19 – 24 was estimated at 58%. The youth in the community also bore the burden occasioned by the lack of information in the community. The youth could barely find information to further their studies. The information they needed to improve their livelihoods was in short supply. Teenage pregnancies, HIV/ aids, the abuse of drugs especially alcohol and dagga are prevalent here amongst teenagers. To further stress the usefulness of information to rural communities such as Amsterdam, the researcher found that there had been a remarkable drop in the transmission of HIV/Aids since the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) launched their treatment and prevention information in the community. The community members started going for voluntary testing and counseling.

The community is geographically widespread, with 30km to 40km between villages. This means that students in these communities walk long distances in order to get to their schools. Some have to cross bridges over swollen rivers to get to their schools during the rainy season and sometimes they are unable to attend school for weeks. Furthermore,, information resources barely reach the residents of these communities, and the surrounding farms communities as a result of poor roads and poor electricity and water supply. In these communities, people travelled more than 40km to get to one service point or the other. The most vulnerable, namely the elderly, children heading families, orphans and the disabled could hardly get to most of these service points in

Piet Retief because of transportation costs. The community had one clinic and no ambulance. Therefore, when any member of the community was seriously ill, they had to wait for an ambulance from Piet Retief. This lack of sustainable information in the community entrenches problems of chronic poverty and limits the potential of communities to sustain economic growth, rural livelihoods, and social development (African National Congress: Economic Transformation Committee Discussion Document, 2007:1). The rural communities of Amsterdam therefore need information to survive as urban dwellers.

A thorough understanding of the economic and socio – cultural circumstances within the context of information–seeking, need and use of the Amsterdam community would go a long way in bridging this information gap. The study determined the extent to which specific factors, such as personality, work–related and environmental factors influenced the rural communities' information use and the impact of these in meeting their information needs. The study did not only identify the information needs of Amsterdam community in Mkhondo Municipality of Mpumalanga Province but also suggested a sustainable information structure that would stimulate growth in the environment and enhanced their problem – solving capabilities.

1.4 Research questions

This study answered the following research questions:

- What information sources are available to meet the needs of members of Amsterdam community?
- Which factors influence the rural communities' use of information?
- What is the state of library and information service provision to the economically disadvantaged in the rural community of Amsterdam?
- Does the library have any part to play in the improvement of information services to the economically disadvantaged rural communities?

1.5 Aim and objectives.

The main aim of the study is to determine the extent to which specific factors, such as personality, work-related and environmental factors can influence the rural communities' information use and the impact of these in meeting their information needs.

The specific objectives are:

- To identify available sources to meet the information needs of the members of the Amsterdam community ;
- To determine the critical factors that affect the community's access to information;
- To find out the state of library and information service provision to the economically disadvantaged in rural areas.
- To suggest ways of improving library and information services in the rural Amsterdam community.

1.6 Significance of the study

The findings of this study will contribute towards identifying the information needs of the economically disadvantaged community of Amsterdam in the Mkhondo Municipality of the Mpumalanga Province of South Africa and thereby providing rich literature on the reading and information needs and information seeking behaviours of the economically disadvantaged in the rural community of Amsterdam and South Africa by extension. Such information is vital for reference and can be used by all stakeholders within and outside the community.

1.7 Delimitation of the study

The initial drawback was the geographic spread of the population and transport issues. Many of the villages were far from each other and in most cases, were so sparsely populated that the researcher did not find enough people to interview. As a result of bad

roads to and within those remote villages, transportation became another limitation. The researcher had to consider the cost implications and the time wasted in going to places where there were too few people to interview.

The researcher went to the field with an interpreter and two research assistants who were from Amsterdam but language still posed a problem since it was not possible to do a thorough translation of the interview schedule into SiSwati – Zulu. Some wordings had to be fine-tuned to fit their understanding of the topics.

Many of the rural people were suspicious at the initial stages of the interview. It took time for them to adjust, after repeated visits to the villages.

1.8 Geographic limitation

The study was restricted to the information-seeking behaviour of economically disadvantaged communities of Amsterdam of Mpumalanga Province of South Africa.

1.9 Definition of terms

The concepts employed in this research have been defined and explained to make for proper understanding and to contextualize the issues raised by the study. A few of such concepts and terms include:

1.9.1 Development

Development is a multidimensional process involving major changes in social structures, popular attitudes, and national institutions, as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality, and the eradication of poverty. Development, in essence, must represent the whole gamut of change by which an entire social system, tuned to the diverse basic needs and desires of individuals and social groups within that system, moves away from a condition of life widely perceived

as unsatisfactory toward a situation or condition of life regarded as materially and spiritually better (Todaro and Smith,2009; Ogunshola,2011).

1.9.2 Developing communities

In this context, it refers to those groups who are socio–economically and technologically underdeveloped or neglected in accordance with the criteria applied in industrialized communities (Todaro and Smith:2009)

1.9.3 Economically disadvantaged communities

In this study, the term economically disadvantaged communities refers to those who are poor and are unable to access the necessities of life; eg food, water and electricity They are mainly people with low literacy levels and usually have large families with little or no skills for employment. It is difficult for this group to break the vicious circle of poverty (Harande:2009)

1.9.4 Environmental factor

The environment within which the life and work of an information user takes place encompasses the social environment, its organizational structure, including the information services and systems, economic situation, technology, culture and tradition. The environment conditions the occurrence of certain needs (Uga: 2007)

1.9.5 Information behaviour

It is defined as the totality of human behaviour in relation to sources and channels of information, including both active and passive information seeking, and information use. Thus, it includes face – to – face communication with others, as well as the passive

reception of information as in, for example, watching TV advertisements, without any intention to act on the information given (Wilson:2002)

1.9.6 Information needs

Information needs of developing communities are linked to survival and existence information which has direct bearing on basic human needs. Poor communities have a dire shortage of information for decision making in their daily lives. As a result of an inadequate educational background, a limited field of experience and underdeveloped cognitive abilities, they are often not able to identify and express their own needs (Kamba:2010).

1.9.7 Information – seeking behaviour

Wilson (2002) defines information seeking behaviour as the purposive seeking of information as a consequence of a need to satisfy some goal. In the course of seeking, the individual may interact with manual information systems (such as a newspaper or a library), or with computer – based systems (such as the World Wide Web).

1.9.8 Personality factors

Personality is a set of unique and relatively stable individual features of a person, which expresses his / her identity, and is developed in a process of biological, psychological and social development by the person's environment and his / her own cognitive activity(Wilson:2002)

1.9.9 Rural areas

Rural areas in this context refers to places which are located in the remote areas, far from large towns or cities, the countryside. Rural areas from this particular discussion,

bore the brunt of underdevelopment. More than those in urban communities, they lacked almost everything (Unagha and Ibenne,2011)

1.9.10 Work – related factors

The features of the roles a person plays in life, including professional roles, are the effect of the behaviour patterns established in a society for the particular role, for example, mother, leader, manager, farmer, doctor or member of a particular group. Certain roles indicate specific information needs. Work is a collection of tightly inter – linked human activities with explicitly or implicitly understood purposes, meanings and values. Work is also a process, behaviour and a transient procedure, not a static structure (Huvila, 2008:7).

1.10 Structure of the thesis

The report was organized into five chapters:

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

This chapter outlined the background of the research problem, the problem statement and the core questions investigated, as well as the aim and objectives of the study, the importance of the study, the research methodology used in the investigation and the definition of terms

CHAPTER 2: Theoretical framework and literature review

This chapter focused on the review of relevant literature on the subject of information needs and information – seeking behavior of disadvantaged communities both nationally and locally. The theoretical framework upon which the study was anchored was also discussed in this chapter.

CHAPTER 3: Research methodology

This chapter provided the details of the research methodology used for the study, instruments used for data collection and their suitability for the research were presented. The sampling size, purposes of collecting primary data, semi – structured

interviews, focus group discussions and observations which followed an unstructured pattern was discussed in this chapter

CHAPTER 4: Analysis, and interpretation of data

The information collected from the respondents in Amsterdam in the course of the investigation, observations and the focus group discussions were reported in this chapter. References to the literature were analysed and interpreted accordingly

CHAPTER 5: The presentation of findings conclusions, recommendations, and future areas of study

The presentation of findings, conclusion, future areas of study and recommendations based on the investigation conducted with the locals in Amsterdam to understand their information – seeking behaviour concluded the chapter.

1.11 Chapter summary

The introduction of the study examined the problem areas of information – seeking behaviours, needs and use in general terms from library scholars. The background information on Amsterdam and the research problems of the study were presented. The critical factors that could influence the information – seeking behaviour of a rural community such as Amsterdam were identified with the aid of Wilson's model of information – seeking behaviour and was used in the study to investigate how the personality, work or role – related factors and the environment affected the rural community of Amsterdam.

The introduction chapter also identified the core research questions and aim and objectives, and the significance of the study. The terms used in the study were explained to give a better understanding and the structure of the thesis was also outlined. Chapter two of this thesis dealt with the literature on information – seeking behaviour, need and use in rural poor communities based on the literature in the field of

information – seeking, need and use and the sources and channels used by disadvantaged rural communities.

CHAPTER TWO

2 Theoretical framework and literature review

2.1 Introduction

A study of the information – seeking behaviour of the rural community of Amsterdam was initiated because of the high levels of unemployment, abject poverty, teenage pregnancies, and the struggle for daily existence and illiteracy among the rural people. The investigation focused on the information needs of the people and the critical factors that affect the community's access to information. The study also focused on the ways in which the people of Amsterdam meet their information needs, the sources and channels they use and ways to bridge the information gap that exists within the community. Many researchers in the field of library and information science agree that the most important factor affecting rural development is the lack of information, and that rural communities are still backward today because of the unavailability of basic community and citizenship information (Gwang, 2011:1 - 4)

The literature review, therefore, investigated the relevant literature on factors that affect the information – seeking behaviour of economically disadvantaged communities. The literature determined the information sources available to rural communities, and the critical factors that affect the communities' use of information. The literature, in addition, looked at the characteristics and circumstances of libraries and what they are doing to meet the information requirements of the economically disadvantaged in rural communities and finally, ways of improving services to the economically disadvantaged in rural communities were suggested.

2.2 Rural underdevelopment, poverty, and development

Underdevelopment was defined by Todaro and Smith (2009:841) as an economic situation in which there are persistent low standards of living, in conjunction with absolute poverty, low per capita income, low rates of economic growth, low consumption levels, poor health services, high death rates, high birth rates, dependence on foreign economies, and limited freedom to choose among activities that satisfy human wants.

The Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, (Green Paper on Land Reform, 2011:3) defined underdevelopment thus: “poverty, unemployment, relative income inequality, and cultural backwardness”. In addition, it defined development as “shared growth, and prosperity, full employment, relative income equality and cultural progress.” The Green Paper submitted that “these two opposing socio – economic pillars, development and underdevelopment, were a direct function of certain political choices and decisions, as well as certain administrative traditions and institutions, processes and procedures. Apartheid was the outcome of particular political choices and decisions which were executed through a plethora of oppressive policies and laws, that were carefully crafted to achieve the set outcome”.

In a study conducted by Ahmed (2005:6), where he explored the health – seeking behaviour of disadvantaged populations in rural Bangladesh, he found a relationship between poverty and public health. From his study, Ahmed was able to establish a two – way causal relationship between poverty and health. He concluded, “poverty affects health through poor nutrition, environmental degradation, illiteracy, harmful lifestyles, social exclusion and lack of access to healthcare”.

Ogunsola (2011:3) defined development as a democratic process that could be considered to be taking place when unemployment, inequality, and poverty were declining. He also stated that if they remained high, a community could not be said to be developing. Growth may be concerned with macro – economic indicators but development is about improvements in the conditions of people. The different types of development as identified by Ogunsola, were:

- Social development

- Political development
- Psychological development
- Economic development

Each requires different capacities and for “development to be feasible, it must be bottom – up and participatory, and for the masses to be actively involved, they must be empowered.”

Development is a multidimensional process involving major changes in social structures, popular attitudes, and national institutions, as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality, and the eradication of poverty. Development, in essence, must represent the whole gamut of change by which an entire social system, tuned to the diverse basic needs and desires of individuals and social groups within that system, moves away from a condition of life widely perceived as unsatisfactory toward a situation or condition of life regarded as materially and spiritually better (Todaro and Smith,2009:16). At least three basic core values could serve as a conceptual basis and practical guidelines for understanding the inner meaning of development. These core values are life – sustenance, self – esteem and freedom. “The three core values relate to fundamental human needs that find expression in almost all societies and cultures at all times” (Phahlamohlaka, 2008:6).

From the various definitions of underdevelopment and development shown above, community poverty can be said to be associated with factors such as poor housing, lack of safe water, lack of sanitation services, poor educational facilities and little opportunity for employment (Swanepoel and De Beer,2010:8). The authors also pointed out that, “Community poverty is not only manifested in lack of amenities. In poor communities disease is prevalent, the infant mortality rate is high, school drop – out figures are high, the incidence of malnutrition is rife, and there is a lot of ignorance.”

Gwang (2011:1) classifies information user communities in Nigeria (it is equally relevant for the present study) according the following categories:

- Professional or vocation characteristics, eg., engineers, accountants, farmers, nomads, miners, etc.

- Institutional affiliation, eg., information user communities found in universities, polytechnics, Colleges of Education, Secondary Schools, Primary Schools, etc.
- Geographical location, eg., information user groups that reside in riverine areas, arid regions, the mountain ranges. People that reside in such locations may constitute heterogeneous user groups and have to be determined in order to be able to provide library and information services that would be relevant to them (community profiling).
- Restrictions in terms of access, e.g. , people who are physically challenged; refugees; women in purdah; the mentally challenged; illiterates; etc. it was necessary to identify the information user communities because this constituted the process of diagnosing/analyzing their information needs without which the library and information services provided for them could not be customized.

The concept of information has been widely accepted as a basic resource which all people use to improve their condition of living and is regarded as essential to development process (Kamba,2009:14). Information does not only expand the possibilities of social, political, educational and economic development (different types of development) of any country, but it facilitates awareness and empowerment. Information is equally regarded as both an asset and a resource for development (Kamba (2009:14).

Information should be seen as a key resource that could aid development. The Provision of information alone is unlikely to empower communities and aid development. Information needs to be focused and targeted toward problems. Information provision would only lead to effective use when it was targeted toward issues such as new opportunities for improvement, markets and pricing, health

information and valuable resources for improving productivity (Nandi and Gurstein, 2007:1).

Information is seen as a power tool for personal, organizational, and national development. It is said to be an essential part of a nation's resources and access to it is one of the basic human rights. It should not only be seen as a national resources vital for scientific and economic progress but also as a medium for social communication (Nkiko and Yusuf,2008:1).

The development of any community (urban or rural) generally depends on the use of information which allows equal participation in developmental processes of the society. It should be regarded as the most promising approach to a reduction in the dependency culture, building self – confidence and self – reliance of the people in that particular community. Information is very essential for capacity building in any nation or community. Access to it enables people to be informed and, be better able to influence community issues and take decisions (Kamba,2009:14).

The then deputy President, Thabo Mbeki (cited in Hart, 2011:1) stated that, the “ability to use information effectively is now the single most important factor in deciding the competitiveness of countries”.

Durrance et al (2006:2) stated that, at any time, in hundreds of communities in democratic nations across the world, citizens are working with others to help solve community problems – often at the local, neighbourhood level. They work with government agencies to reduce crime, improve the visual appearance of blighted areas, or stop an action that might adversely affect the community. Public and community libraries have transformed over the last 50 years from collections of books, manuscripts, journals and other sources of recorded information to providers of information resources and services that do not even require a building (Ogunsola,2011:1). Public and community libraries are the institutions entrusted with the provision of information resources needed for rural development in communities.

The burden of poverty, low literacy levels, unemployment and lack of access to information in a rural community such as Amsterdam places it at a severe disadvantage. The rural town had no sustainable information targeted at community members. This is compounded by the fact that these deep rural – based residents were without the basic necessities of life, such as electricity, water and proper sanitation. The roads were in such a deplorable condition that information providers, even when they were available could not get there easily.

Generally, the rural people needed information for their daily survival, citizenship and for a sustainable and independent existence just like their counterparts in the urban areas. The professionals serving the rural communities must have a passion for community development to enjoy serving such communities. Information and activities provided by libraries could make a tremendous difference in the lives of the people (Zaverdinos – Kockott, 2004; Hart,2006;Malekabadizadeh,Shokrane and Hosseini,2009).

The ability of the librarian to coordinate with other agencies should be considered as paramount in the discharge of his or her work. Alleviating poverty and creating the needed social capital in the community could be achieved by not only supplying them with materials in a readable form, but as mentioned above, to involve those who could help. The librarian working in the community must work with stakeholders and agencies within and outside the community. (Hart, 2007; Nyana, 2009; Meyer,2009; Kamba;2010;Gwang,2011;Ogunsola,2011).

According to Mchombu (2004:237), his research at community information centres in rural Malawi and Tanzania, indeed, demonstrated that a developmental model for libraries was possible, in which a positive relationship between development and information and information centres (or library) is constructed.

OECD (1996) specified four key requirements for the success of a rural district, understood as a socio – economic network: flexibility, competence, efficiency, and

synergy. Synergy could best be achieved where information, innovation and business transactions flowed most freely.

2.3 Information-seeking behaviour of the economically disadvantaged community

Information-seeking behaviour was the result of a recognition of a need as understood by the user. According to Gu, Mendonca and Wu (2003:1), information – seeking behaviours are driven by cognitive needs that arise from the context of the information needs. The context consisted of the person, the roles of the person, and the environment in which information – seeking processes happen.

Earlier studies in the field of information – seeking behaviour, concentrated on the behaviour of users in relation to the systems or on how a given information system was explored by the user. There is now a shift from the previous approach, to the user's approach to information and establishing what the individual's (or the organization's) information needs are, and how information – seeking behaviour relates to other task – oriented behaviour (Wilson, 2000: 52).

There was overwhelming agreement by scholars in the field of library and information science that any study on the information – seeking behaviour of a group or individuals should focus on the user in the context of his / her role within the community and the social, cultural, political and economic and the information environment of the person in context. To understand the information needs of economically disadvantaged communities, therefore, it is necessary to study their information – seeking behaviour and the channels they use to accomplish a particular task (Wilson,2000:51 - 52).

Rural communities form the bulk of the economically disadvantaged, especially in Africa (Iwe, 2003; Dent, 2006; Unagha and Ibenne,2011).The problems of the lack of infrastructure provision, high illiteracy rates and poverty, as well as the lack of

information infrastructures continue to pose a huge setback for development within these communities.

2.3.1 Community information – seeking, need and use

Because information behaviours of groups of people emerge as a response to their information needs, rural dwellers would need to make sense of incoming information. How they seek and use information ultimately influences the information behaviour of the people. It is evident from such responses as acceptance, resistance, beliefs, motivation, relevance, trust and thinking, whether the information disseminated is well received (Courtright, 2007; Meyer, 2009).

According to Mchombu (2004: 53), the information- seeking patterns of various groups in society differ and , therefore, there is need for information centre workers to be aware of such differences, in order to make provision for information that would cater for the whole community. This position was equally supported by Gericke et al. (1996:265), who reiterated that the needs of economically disadvantaged persons are determined by the nature of their disadvantage, and that different groups of disadvantaged will have different needs. Developing communities have become underdeveloped as a result of a variety of factors, such as social, economic and educational factors, which are found in a number of developing as well as highly developed countries. Such groups often live in abject poverty are frequently unemployed, and have large family units whose members have high levels of illiteracy. Their main needs are for education (especially for literacy programmes) and information that would enable them overcome their everyday problems.

They have frequent need for community information. Community information is described as information that everyone needs to cope successfully with the various roles he or she has to play in his or her community. A member of the community could simultaneously be a parent, employee, patient, user, tax payer, registered voter, tenant

and so forth. For these roles to be played successfully and to satisfy community demands, an individual requires suitable information (Gericke, 2002:37–39).

A community, as pointed out by (Stilwell, 1989:261), is made up of persons who bring to life a variety of resources, material, knowledge and skill. Each member of the community has needs and resources that could be used to satisfy those needs when adequate information is provided.

According to Kalley (1995:1), the term “community information” has two aspects. One is concerned with the nature of the information provided, which means, information in the community to help people with daily problem-solving or in raising the quality of their lives. The other is concerned with the nature of the patrons served, namely those who belong to the lower socio–economic groups or who are disadvantaged because of their limited capacity to obtain, understand or act on information that affects their lives. Unfortunately, library scholars and researchers attribute the low use of libraries in Africa to high levels of illiteracy, the lack of awareness of the information needs of rural communities, inappropriate collections and services, the lack of surveys for specific needs of a particular community, the lack of funding and cooperation between information related agencies, and the lack of skilled librarians (Nyana,2009:12).

According to Mtega and Roland (2013:64) the type of information needed for decision making may vary from one person to another. Scholars have identified that the type of information needed is related to the day to day activities in which a person is involved, the geographical location of the information seeker, the level of education, age, sex, field of study, profession, career stage, and size of business operation an individual has. Individual information needs determine the types of information services to be provided and the sources to be consulted. Mtega and Roland also point out that, in rural areas, information needs arise from the day to day activities that rural dwellers involve themselves in. The study conducted by Mtega and Roland categorized information needs in the rural areas into:

- Health
- Agricultural

- Educational
- Housing
- Employment
- Transportation
- Religion
- Welfare
- Family
- Legal information

Other information needed may relate to crime and safety, policies and government, land and human rights. The availability of information entailed the provision and supply of information in the right quantity and at the right time. Accurate, credible and accessible information, in whatever medium and quantity, is meaningless if it does not meet the community's economic, social, political, cultural, scientific and technological needs (Iwara 2013:2).

Murugan and Balasubramani (2011:1 – 2) define information – seeking as a human process that requires adaptive and reflective control over afferent and efferent actions of the information seeker. The study of information – seeking behaviour, according to Murugan and Balasubramani, includes: the strategies people adopt for making discoveries, their expectations, attitudes, anxieties, promotion of relationships as they live and work with other information users.

A study conducted by Yoon (1998:1 -2) on information – seeking behaviour pointed out that the cognitive aspect of Information – seeking (IS) involves both the certainty and uncertainty aspects of user need. Certainty as explained in the study referred to what a user knows or what they think they know, such as their experience, knowledge, beliefs, goals and plans. Whereas uncertainty referred to what the user is aware of not knowing, thus creating the need to find out. This is often referred to as an information need or a cognitive gap. The certainty or uncertainty constituted the user's perception of his or her (IS) situation. Uncertainty is defined in terms of the certainty of what the user perceived regarding the situation. Users employ certainty in order to point out what they

did not know and thus need to find out, uncertainty. Certainty is therefore involved in user perception of information need.

Palsdottir (2008:1 – 4) studied the information – seeking behaviour, health self – efficacy beliefs and health behaviour in Icelanders' everyday life with the concept of relevance judgments. In the study, Palsdottir pointed out that their relevance judgements were an essential aspect of their information behaviour. With the increasing variability of sources and channels to seek information from, it had not only become more important to pay attention to what information sources were favoured by the different groups but also the criteria that were used when people chose between the various sources.

The barriers that could influence information behaviour were also identified by Palsdottir, as difficulties in interpretation, beliefs about reliability, usefulness and access to information.

Bates (cited in Talja and Hartel,2007:9) in a study of everyday life information in information – seeking studies defines the term “life information” as information needed for successful living. The area of need ranged all the way from sheer survival (stay away from dogs that walk funny and foam from the mouth) to the advanced forms of self – realization (Where can I study ceramics or transcendental meditation?). The scope of information that falls under this rubric is greater than it might at first appear. It includes vast amounts of information about how to do many different things in one's culture that would be acceptable and leads to one's survival and emotional satisfaction.

The main groups within the community are identified as:

- **Semi – literate and new literate community members;**

Mchombu (2004: 53) believes that communicating adequate information to this group is essential because they constitute up to 30% or more of all the adult population. They therefore, have a big contribution to make in the development process of the community. Studies conducted by Mchombu also showed that the best approach to dealing with the information requirements of this group or indeed any other group within any given community is to have great regard for the community's oral information

system. This is because a lot of the knowledge needed by the community can be found in the oral information system.

- **Women members in the community**

According to Zaid and Popoola, (2010:2), the main concern of women is to alleviate the socio – economic status of the rural poor household. Mchombu (2003: 55) also stated that women played multiple roles in African society. As a result, they found it difficult, as a group, to participate fully in information sharing activities. Most women work in the farms with men. Women naturally see to the overall management of the house. For example, they go to farms, prepare food for the family, fetch water and firewood and take care of their children.

The multiple roles played by women in the community mean that their information needs are very diverse and, therefore, necessitate different sources or channels of information. In a study of the information seeking behaviour of rural women in Malaysia, Abu Bakar (2011:1) points out that in traditional society, women are supposed to do housework, take care of children, and give the family emotional stability. He also contends that, with the social and economic changes that affect urban and rural society, traditional values have also changed. More women are engaged in full – time jobs. No longer are they only women and mothers; they are also business women, politicians, and contributors to society.

Abu Bakar (2011:1) points out that rural women, who in most cases did not have full time jobs, had also exposed themselves to various fields of financial acquisition including commerce, service and agriculture.

This also means that rural women should receive information on to how to perform these economic activities in order for them to get more returns on their efforts. For example, they need to know how to grow vegetables, how to produce a marketable product and how to advertise services provided.

In their study, Ziad and Popoola (2010:2) also find that most of the programmes aimed at ameliorating the working and living conditions of women fail because women in rural areas, for whom such programmes are meant, lagged behind in terms of socio – economic advancement. They blame this on culture of silence, resignation and docility adopted by rural women in Nigeria. They believe that “the rural women in Nigeria are not inherently poor, nor doomed to ignorance and disease. Rather they are blessed with massive fertile land and mineral resources and also a huge virile labour force, which can be transformed into goods and services. The only problem is the absence of an effective information system pattern for mobilizing and stimulating them into action with a view to improving their quality of life.” Adequate information should be supplied to them at all times and in the format they are accustomed to.

To further emphasize this point, Jiyani (2002:28), states that women make up 65% of the population of the Republic of South Africa and that in many rural households, especially among blacks, men leave home for the urban areas in search of jobs, leaving the women behind to maintain the entire household on their own. The study showed that women in South Africa are faced with the same challenges experienced by their counterparts in other developing countries in Africa, such as illiteracy, poverty, low social status and multiple roles of child care, farming and housework

- **Young community members**

Young people between the ages of 13 and 25 years are in a difficult position. They are neither children nor full adults. In most cultures, the young people do not get equal opportunities (occasions) to express their views or to participate fully in development activities on their own terms. With the outbreak of HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and early pregnancies, this group is on the front line of many of the development issues in the community. The young people do not have many opportunities (occasions) to express their points of view towards finding solutions to problems that face them and their communities (Mchombu, 2004:57). The young

members of the community usually rely on their peers for information because of the lack of adequate sources of information meant specifically for them. They often get misled because they listen to those who know little or nothing about the issues at hand.

Issues of the cultural breakdown between generations in most communities as a result of western influences and the modernization model of development, should be examined carefully when studying information needs and use by people in this category (Mchombu, 2004; Nwagwu, 2010). This group has a great need for intelligent information in the basic areas of human behaviour, especially in the area of sexual education. Information on sexual and reproductive health matters is very crucial for young people, if they are to avoid the problems of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and early pregnancies Mchombu (2004:57).

2.3.2 Information behaviour

The word behaviour refers to a person's response when he or she is exposed to a particular phenomenon. Responses are activated by the inner emotions, feelings, or perceptions a person experienced as a result of a particular phenomenon (Meyer, 2009: 3). Palsdottir (2008: 2), defines information behaviour as "the totality of human behaviour in relation to sources and channels of information, including both active and passive information – seeking and information use. According to Palsdottir, active information seeking stands for a behaviour where individuals experience a lack of knowledge and act on it by purposively seeking - information. There is also a general view, that information - seeking is not restricted to purposive information – seeking. Passive attention as part of information seeking behaviour happens when the use of the mass media results in information acquisition, even when there was no intention to seek for information (Wilson 2000: 49).

Ajiboye and Tella (2007: 42) point out that researchers have given various definitions of information behaviour. Some define the term based on the general model of information behaviour developed by Wilson (1997a: 39), where he posits that a general model of

information behaviour needs to include at least three elements: (1) an information need and its drives, i.e. the factors that give rise to an individuals' perception of need; (2) the factors that affected the individuals response to perception and needs; and (3) the processes or actions involved in that response, which include those activities a person may engage in when identifying his/ her own needs for information, searching for such information in any way, and using or transferring that information. Wilson (1997:552) further states that the experience of need could only be discovered by deduction from behaviour through the reports of the person in need.

Rural communities' information behaviour is closely tied with their information needs. The needs necessitate the behaviour, and it varies even within the same community as a result of factors such as age, personality, and work – related, environmental factors e.t.c. (Wilson, 2002; Mahwasane, 2008; Kamba, 2010; Harande, 2009)

2.3.3 Reading habits

According to (Meyer, 2009: 3), people's responses to a particular phenomenon may differ depending on their cognitive state of mind, their experience and their levels of knowledge and skill at the time of the encounter. Meyer also pointed out that, repetitive encounters under the same conditions may result in the development of a certain pattern of response which would eventually become habits when information is used, or it may reflect attitudes when incoming information is received.

Nyana (2009:9) stated that rural communities are mostly inhabited by illiterates, who depend mostly on oral communication or radio to satisfy their daily information needs. Because the illiterate person cannot read and is dependent mainly on the verbal transfer of messages, he or she can only use different types of visual and audiovisual media.

The dominance of an oral tradition among the black population affects their use of traditional public libraries. Reading is new to the generality of rural communities in

Africa. Illiterate groups are not able to contribute in any meaningful way to the development of their various communities due to circumstances such as poverty, illiteracy and the lack of information infrastructure (Meyer,2009: 4), in which rural people find themselves. They are not even able to help themselves because their access to information is limited. The same problem, sooner than later, becomes a vicious circle, because children from such backgrounds lack the motivation to read or to get a meaningful education.

Nyana (2009:11), states that, in today's global information society, non – literate people are at a permanent disadvantage – unsure of their rights, unable to fulfill their potentials and unable to play a full part in society. They are disempowered. Literacy should be a right and a capability that is fundamental to overcoming poverty.

Several library science scholars acknowledge the importance of the oral tradition to rural Africa and that information can be transmitted orally but they also accept that literacy is still the final goal. (Dent, 2006:18 Nyana, 2009:11). Library use in Africa can be stimulated only when the majority of the population, especially those in the rural areas are literate enough to process the written word and to also articulate their own information needs from the library or from any other information centres.

2.3.4 Library use

Unagha and Ibenne (2011:1) state that the world we live in today is becoming increasingly globalized and information – driven. The usefulness or the value of information for the survival of man can not be overemphasized. Individuals, organizations and societies in general all needed one form of information or the other for their daily survival. They further claim, “that information has become a tool for proper integration through interactive interpersonal networking and a means of maintaining a healthy balance in such interactions for the purposes of personal and group development.” They point out also that rural people have a different information

environment from that of their urban counterparts because of obvious factors as pointed out in Section 2.2.

Rural dwellers lack information awareness (Ugah, 2007: 1.), They are not always aware of the resources available both within the library and elsewhere in the community. Libraries are still finding it difficult to carry the rural people along with them. They have not been able to get rid of the old ways of analyzing literature needs, reading habits and patterns of library use of the traditional “middle class” clientele of the public library (Gericke, 1996:101).

2.4 Factors affecting information – seeking behaviour of the economically disadvantaged communities.

2.4.1 Personality factors

Personality is described by (Niedzwiedzka,2003:4), as a set of unique and relatively stable individual features of a person, which express his or her identity, and are developed in a process of biological, psychological and social development by a person’s environment and his or her own cognitive activity.

The psychological attribute of the person in context is often treated as a non issue. The psychological attributes consist of the attitude people display towards life around them. Poor people, because of their peculiar circumstances and their everyday battle for survival, harbour that sense of apathy towards people or institutions that might want to steer them to a different cause of action (Swanepoel and De Beer, 2009:13). Swanepoel et al, point out further that a “lack of self – esteem is another psychological characteristic of people caught in a poverty situation. They often believe that they lack the ability to ‘do something’. Hence they become more and more dependent on aid from government or NGOs’ welfare assistance. They are not prepared to take risks because if they fail (for instance in an agricultural project), they stand to lose a lot. Having

experienced negative situations in the past, they are mistrustful of strangers and even people they know who might suggest new ideas. The psychological environment of the poor is strongly influenced by experiences in the past.”

Green (cited in Connaway, Dick and Radford, 2011:7), based on the rational choice theory developed in economics, conceived that, even the most complex social behaviour may be viewed in terms of discrete and elementary individual actions. Individuals from this point of view,,are seen as acting in their own self – interest in these individual actions – not necessarily to achieve similar goals as other individuals, but according to their own preferences, values or utilities. The assumed self interest dictates that each individual choice among actions is rationally dictated towards their own values.

Halder,Roy and Chakraborty (2010: 42) see information seeking as a problem solving process, which, in most cases, can become an active and changeable process that not only depends on the situation but also on the individual that seeks information. Personality is regarded as the driver of behaviour, as an important mechanism that guides behaviour. They hold the opinion that the reasons behind different information approaches might lie in the context; i.e. the person’s inner processes, information habits, needs, cognitive abilities, learning outcomes and personality traits.

Studies have revealed that, within the personality, one important psychological mechanism which guides behaviour is personality (Halder, Roy and Chakraborty, 2010:43), and that as personality forms an inclination towards certain characteristic reactions in any given situation, personality traits are likely to influence attitudes and behaviour in an information-seeking context. The inner traits and personality dimensions of the information seeker interact with the contextual factors to formulate the impact in the form of motivation for information, information habits, and patterns of information-seeking and the nature of cognitive, affective, and social utilization of information.

Mahwasane (2008:14 - 17) has also identified factors such as motivation, interest, attitudes towards literature and media, reading ability and other user skills, and

receptivity. Some of these are determined largely by the social and cultural groups to which the user belongs or as Halder, Roy and Chakraborty (2010: 43) put it, depend on the “situation.”

From the social psychological perspective, personality can be regarded as the totality of biologically based and learnt behaviour and is viewed as a complex biological, mental, and social factor that forms a person’s unique responses to environmental stimuli and which if it persists over time and situation could influence human behaviour. It is now widely accepted that the first step in studying a person’s personality is to understand the individual’s behavioural manifestations, which means that you could not begin to sum up a personality outside the person’s behavioural responses. Since information seeking is regarded as a behaviour one displays in response to information need, the relationship with personality becomes obvious (Heinstrom,2000:6)

Researchers in the field of Library and information science are in agreement that a strong link exists between personality and information seeking behaviour, with sound theoretical assumptions (Heinstrom ,2000; Halder, Roy and Chakraborty,2010). Personality composition is vital in any analysis of information seeking behaviour. Heinstrom (2000:3) used the five factor model of personality to study information behaviour. The five traits of personality as identified by Heinstrom (2000: 4 – 6) are:

- Extraversion: extraverts tend to be more physically and verbally active whereas the introverts are independent, reserved, steady and like being alone. The person in the middle of the dimension likes a mix between social situations and solitude.
- Agreeableness: the agreeable scale is linked to altruism, nurturance, caring and emotional support versus hostility, indifference, self – centeredness and jealousy..
- Conscientiousness: the conscientious person concentrates on only a couple of goals and strives hard to achieve them. He is career oriented, while the flexible person is more impulsive and easier to persuade from one task to another.

Conscientiousness has been linked to educational achievement, particularly to the will to achieve.

- Neuroticism: the person with a tendency towards neuroticism is more worried, temperamental and prone to sadness. Emotional stability is related to calm, stable and relaxed persons, whereas neuroticism is linked to anger, anxiousness, and depression.
- Openness: people with high openness have broader interests, are liberal and like novelty. This factor relates to intellect, openness to new ideas, cultural interests, educational aptitude, and creativity. The individuals are cultured, esthetic, intellectual, and open. Openness to experiences can be connected to activities such as writing, science and art.

According to Heinström (2000:6), personality traits are expressed in learning styles, which are in turn reflected in learning strategies, and eventually produce a certain learning outcome. Personality traits serve as directors or block motivation and learning strategies.

The personality traits of an individual encompass the biological, mental, hereditary or genetic and social factors as stated above. In general, in the social psychological approach, personality is viewed as a complex of biological, mental and social factors (Steinrova and Susol, 2007:2). The biological and hereditary compositions of a person within a community that may relate to user behaviour are sex, age and intelligence. These factors affect individuals differently in their information seeking behaviour within a community setting.

For example, a study done by Abu Bakar (2011: 2) on rural women in Malaysia, pointed to the fact that, in addition to taking care of their families, a house wife was also expected to know something about health matters, children's education and family economics. The study showed that women are more likely to seek more information that pertains mostly to the well – being of their children, health and education. A study on rural women in Nigeria also supported the same scenario, where women, despite

receiving little or no information for their everyday needs, still had the need for more information than their male counterparts and were likely to seek such information, when it is available, than men (Zaid and Popoola 2010: 8).

Gender as a variable can help us understand cognitive and social frameworks of human information processing. Gender analysis represents just one part of the complex picture of human information behaviour. Additional personal and social factors for example, age, education, job, technological skills, foreign languages, situations, tasks, etc, are part of a complex modeling of information behaviour (Steinerova and Susol,2007:12). According Steinerova and Susol (2007:2), the different development of mental representations and different emphasis on social and cultural contexts have an impact on information behaviour. While women stress the need for relations between people, men are concentrated on individual performance.

In the area of technology, studies show that men and women value technology differently. While women prefer social collaboration, contextual information and personal identification, men's use of information and technologies is determined by preference for individual work and competition. For men, new technologies represented an intellectual challenge and play. With women, usually more emotional perception occurs (Fallow,2005). Craig and Gordon (2001:22), in their study of rural non – farming activities and poverty alleviation in Sub – Saharan Africa, were of the view that a general consensus exists in the literature to show that gender is a significant factor determining access to rural non – farming opportunities.

According to (Wilson (1997: 558), some studies carried out by other researchers show that high knowledge levels do, indeed, facilitate information acquisition and in addition to that, that when health motivation is high, those with higher health knowledge perform more actions that relate to their health than individuals with lower knowledge levels. They also found that the amount of health information received by urban residents from all sources declined with age, but that older rural women receive a great deal of information from a variety of sources and that the amount declines only slightly with age. Older men are less inclined to information seeking than younger men. The

researchers also found that a great deal of information received by women could be ascribed to women's traditional role as care – givers and “lay health care providers. A study on women's searching behaviour for nutrition information on food labels found that participants with children searched for nutrition and ingredient information on particular products, without showing an overall interest in more general nutrition information. This showed that the participant's children were the motivating factor in the information seeking process.

In the field of consumer behaviour, the outcome of individual's comprehension capacity was demonstrated to show that the information seeking behaviour of the sexes differed both in their choice of medium, the amount used and the purpose for which it was intended. Since information - seeking is a process in which an individual goes about looking for information; it should be regarded as a complimentary process to information need.

The factors identified in Amsterdam, such as motivation, interest, attitudes towards literature and the media, reading ability and other user skills and receptivity, were not the same for every individual and have been found to either hinder or promote the information seeking process within the community. The Amsterdam community was made up of individuals with varying degrees of needs. In addition, these needs eventually translated to information – seeking behaviour to satisfy those identified daily needs for survival within the community. However, the way such needs were satisfied depended largely on the individual. It was a process that required an information seeker to apply personal knowledge and user skills, or what might be called “personal information infrastructures” such a person's cognitive abilities, his / her knowledge skills in relation to the problem / domain knowledge and skills in general, knowledge and skills specific to a system and knowledge and skills regarding information seeking (Ikoja – Odongo and Ocholla, 2004:58).

2.4.2 Work-related factors

According to Huvila (2008:7), work is a collection of tightly inter-linked human activities with explicitly or implicitly understood purposes, meanings and values. Work is also seen as a process, a behaviour and a transient procedure, not a static structure. Work behaviour is often partially shared and can only be understood based on its individual, cultural and societal meanings, values and purposes through an active articulation of control.

Personal needs are the main driver of motivation that could lead to information seeking behaviour (Wilson, 2000:10). Wilson also indicated that these needs can occur out of the roles an individual plays in social life. The work role can be classified as a set of activities, responsibilities, e.t.c. of an individual, within the community setting, in a quest for earnings, contributing to the community at large, or performing any other role that he or she is socially or culturally positioned for.

The social role is a defined, socially conditioned and internally cohesive set of rules and expectations in reference to the desired behaviour of an individual in specific situations and is connected with his or her social position. In addition, it is a set of basic privileges, rights, and regulations that relate to the person's position in a group. An individual could simultaneously play many social roles. (Olechnicki and Zalecki, as cited in Niedzwiedzka, 2003:4). Research on different groups of rural communities has shown that the roles and related tasks or interpersonal variables undertaken by the community members in the course of their daily practice prompt particular information needs, which in turn give rise to an information-seeking process (Gu, Mendonca and Wu, 2003:2). According to Niedzwiedzka (2003:5), the role a person plays, situates the individual in a particular place in a social system and in an organization or community. Also, it means a defined place in formal and informal communication networks.

The role characteristics of a person, including his or her professional roles, are the effects of the behaviour patterns shaped within that community for that particular role. It

could be the role of a mother, leader, manager, doctor, or a member of a particular group. (Niedzwiedzka, 2003; Pharo, 2004), agree that the features of a professional role are strictly connected with the occupied position, job character and place in a professional hierarchy. Certain roles, as is evident from the foregoing, require specific information.

From the above literature on the work – role, the community members in Amsterdam consisted of individuals with different roles based on their responsibilities within the community. Their information needs were based on the particular roles, which could be the gender role, for example., The female members of the community needed information on health – related issues especially for their children or during pregnancy more than the men did. They also needed information on employment for the survival of their families and information on government grants for single mothers and for orphans, and the elderly in the community. The unfortunate trend of child – headed homes created the need for information to lift them from poverty and get them back to school to acquire, at least, a basic education. Their male counterparts in the community also needed information to be able to support their families. Youths in the community needed to further their education and to empower themselves. The role therefore determined the types of information that the community members needed or asked for.

Many studies have elaborated on the link between the work–role of disadvantaged rural communities and their information–seeking behaviour. For example, a study conducted by Meyer (2009:8), gave a view of rural communities seeking agriculture – related information because those particular members of the community were engaged in maize farming. This was also true of rural farmers in Iran (Rezvanfar, Vahedi and Moradnazi, 2007:5 – 7). The health factors, necessitated the seeking of information by women and expectant mothers for their children, especially on general health and nutrition (Ahmed, 2005:4 -6).

The educational factor could also mean that, in a rural community of Amsterdam where there were low literacy levels, the most urgent information would be education – related information. Studies in the field of information – seeking behaviour within the rural

context, have found that rural people, especially rural women, have much need for economic information because of the economic role they play within their households. Other pressing issues that confront rural communities determine, to a large extent, the information seeking pattern of the community (Dent, 2006; Ikoja – Odongo and Ocholla,2004; Wilson,2003).

2.4.3 Environmental factors

The socio – economic, cultural, and political and other factors seem to dominate the environment in such a way that the poor and illiterate seem to have no meaningful way of escaping poverty. Amsterdam, as a rural town, and the seat of government for the rest of the villages, is surrounded by other deep rural-residents and farming communities. All the villages that surround Amsterdam come to Amsterdam for information even when there is no sustainable information in Amsterdam, and the levels of illiteracy and poverty are too daunting to allow for any individual or community growth. The deep rural parts of Amsterdam were still without electricity, water and sanitation. The environment could be improved with targeted information that addresses the information needs of the people and stimulates positive change.

In addressing the plight of rural communities, Swanepoel and De Beer (2010:10) suggest that a certain level of societal and individual poverty is a result of natural, social, economic, political, psychological and cultural factors that are present in all societies and communities. The above factors identified in the environment of a community, are dependent on each other and must be considered thoroughly, in order to have a more vivid picture of the environment in which poverty eradication and development must be tackled with the provision of relevant information.

Niezdowiedzka (2003:4) reiterates that the environment within which the life and work of an information user takes place, encompasses the social environment, its organizational structure, which includes the information service and systems, economic situations, technology, culture and tradition. “The environment conditions the occurrence of certain needs present in the time of stability”,

Burnett and Jaeger (2008:5) use small worlds to refer to the social environment in which individuals live and work, bonded together by shared interests, expectations, information behaviour, often-economic status, and geographic proximity. The small world is seen as a social group in which 'mutual opinions and concerns are reflected by its members' and in which the interests and activities of individual members are largely determined by normative influences of the small world as a whole. Within each small world, everyday activities, including the processes of information access and exchange, are thus considered the way things are and are frequently taken for granted as being standard across all small worlds, even when they are unique to a specific group.

In analyzing the users' environment, we must take into account the macro (socio-political and economic system of a country, local community or industry sector), mezzo environment (that is, regional environment, local community, and a particular city) or the micro-environment of a single organization. Formal and informal information sources and channels function on all levels (Niedzwiedzka, 2003:4). Niedzwiedzka emphasizes that the characteristic features of the environment might influence (stimulate or hinder) information needs and determine behaviour. All societies contain social groups, each with its own norms, values, customs, habits, and subcultures. Reference groups, such as peer groups, work teams and family, all influence the behaviour of the individual within his or her environment (Gericke, 1996: 207.)

The culture of a people in any given environment shapes the meaning of people's information behaviour and rules determine who is to be considered an information agent. The way we handle the exchange and use information is determined largely by the culture of our environment. Through living and working, people discover, shape, or create information during the process of interacting with the environment or other people. The interaction specifies or shapes what the information should be, what makes sense and what information is sought or neglected (Yeh, 2007:2). Solomon (as cited in Yeh, 2007:2) states: "Information is something that is embedded in the fabric of people's lives and work. Information is constructed through involvement in life's activities, problems, tasks and social and technological structures, as opposed to being

independent and context free”. Culture was identified in the study as an influential factor of human information behaviour.

On the other hand, Wilson (1997: 560), addresses the issues within what he calls, “environmental/ situational barriers” thus: “Time, geography, national cultures, individualism – collectivism and masculinity – femininity and long / short – term orientation to life”. These factors, according to Wilson, the immediate situation of information – seeking activity includes elements that represent barriers to continuing that activity, and that the wider environment could present problems. The environmental factors are:

- Time: It was found that information exchange could be inhibited by time. Meyer, (2005: 7), suggested timing as an important factor in an information – transfer strategy. Mnubi-Mchombu and Ocholla,(2011:15), also indicated that the timing of information services was one of the challenges that faced information access in their study of information seeking behaviour of orphans and vulnerable children in the Ohangwena and Khomas regions in Namibia. Connaway, Dickey, and Radford (2011:7), referred to it as time horizon in information seeking.
- Geography. The age and geographic location of a community could equally affect their information – seeking behaviour as stated above. The geographical location of a library or a community centre could hinder or encourage its use. The rural communities would naturally find it difficult to move from their different villages to and from the library or a community centre.
- Natural cultures. Differences in national cultures, as stated by Wilson, are particularly significant for the transfer of innovations and the associated information.
- Wilson (1997:560), enumerates four dimensions in which cultures might differ: power distance, or the acceptance of unequal distribution of power in organizations; uncertainty avoidance or the extent to which a society feels threatened by uncertain situations, and so tends to avoid such situations; individual–collectivism and masculinity–masculinity or the prevalence of

masculine values of material things, and that of feminine values such as caring for others and fifth dimension is long – term / short – term orientation to life. Based on these tested dimensions and collaborations from other researchers, it is evident that the five dimensions are the crucial dimensions of cultural differences. It is possible therefore, to deduce differences in information – seeking behaviour and information use across cultures that correlate with the five dimensions.

Information has been proved to be culture – dependent as is evident from various studies on rural communities' information – seeking behaviour. According to Unagha and Ibenne (2011:4), "if it is accepted that information is socially conditioned and shaped by social environment from which it originated, it should be remembered that if that information is transferred to a rural community with a different social background and environment, chances are that the information will not be understood in the way it was intended to". Library scholars have attested to this viewpoint and therefore are able to show the link between the environment and the information – seeking behaviour of rural people.

Community developers should "be careful when transmitting information that originates from the developed world to rural people; any information meant for rural people should take cognizance of some other environmental contexts such as culture dependence, medium dependence, context dependence, conversion dependence, and the intangibility of information and the interdependence of information" (Meyer,2005:9 – 10). Meyer further argues , that because information is not regarded as a tangible input resource for development as is technology, or as a product such as seed and fertilizer, traditional people often fail to realize that they might lack information that could help them solve their problems. Traditional people can only comprehend or make meaning out of real – life objects or situations that they are familiar with; or of abstract things that they can compare to physical objects they are conversant with.

The interdependent nature of information and technology means that information is, as matter of cause, always dependent on technology. It therefore, means a constant realignment of information resources with the socio – cultural dynamics of rural people. For any particular information to achieve the desired result in a rural setting, the people must be able to add the incoming information to existing knowledge (Dent, 2006: 18 19; Nyana, 2009: 15 – 17).

2.4.4 The need to study the information–seeking behaviour of the economically disadvantaged

In a study of the information seeking behaviour of the informal sector entrepreneurs in Uganda, Ikoja–Odongo and Ocholla (2004: 59), found that information had a role to play in the everyday lives of the majority of the respondents. The respondents believed that information helped them make rational decisions and enabled them take appropriate actions. It also increased their capacity to see things more widely and become more focused. Those, who said that information did not help them, were a tiny minority Ikoja – Odongo and Ocholla (,2004:60) assumed it could be because of ignorance about information.

As stated above, the study found information useful. “The entrepreneurs stated that the appropriate use of information resulted in several gains. It was observed that entrepreneurs were able to access training opportunities and access loans. They were also able to produce marketable goods and improved customer relations, and they learned and met customer needs. This also increased their ability to sell their products at competitive prices. Some that were engaged in better fishing practices reduced post – harvest losses. This gave them the opportunity to plan prudently within available funds and time, such that from then on, things were done in a much better way, as mistakes and errors were fewer. There were also examples of those who had expanded their business”.

The earlier study was similar to the one conducted by Meyer (2009: 8 – 9), in Phokoane, in the Limpopo Province of South Africa. In this study, Meyer was able to show “the role that information played in the training of traditional farmers to improve their maize growing practices. The background to the case was that a development official succeeded in introducing poor farmers to modern farming practices in such a way that they became sustainable maize growers”. Meyer (2009:8) observed that the trainer focused on indigenous information practices of the traditional farmers instead of the conventional development practices of that time. As a result, the farmers were able to relate to the method and style of communication. The trainer applied behavioural practices typical of the indigenous cultural contexts. These were:

- their trust in and respect for knowledgeable people and the elderly;
- dependence on the groups’ opinion;
- belief in knowledge and experience passed on through generations;
- memorizing information;
- respecting the hierarchical and power structures of the family and the community;
- oral communication to exchange information;
- using acting, dancing and rhymes to memorise new concepts;
- using metaphorical speech and real life demonstration to associate with the existing understanding of a concept;
- associating abstract concepts with real objects;
- lack of literacy; lack of numeracy;
- lack of abstract thinking;
- and lack of formal education,

Meyer (2009:8) observed that:

By skillfully integrating these elements into the training sessions, the trainer succeeded in sharing information on a level that made sense to the particular group. His honesty, dedication, and ability to introduce the right information at the time it was needed enhanced the understanding process. With this particular approach, he won the trust and confidence of the group, and persuaded them to accept the new way of farming. Eventually they produced enough maize to combat hunger and still had a surplus to sell. Once word of the successes of the first group of farmers reached their fellow farmers, the news spread like wildfire and more and more came to be trained in this way.

Over a period of five years more than five thousand farmers were trained to become sustainable maize growers.

In her study, (Dent, 2006:20 -29) also was able to demonstrate the effectiveness of relevant application of information to rural people with her study of the characteristics of the Kitengesa Library in rural Uganda. The success story of the library in Kitengesa came about because the developers aligned themselves with the community right from the conception of the idea to the very end. The library's collection was designed according to the needs of the community members and the close ties the library founders had with the community facilitated full co-operation or a buy in from the people. According to Dent (2006: 28), the library's usefulness was mainly due to the type of information provided for the community, the information was relevant to the everyday lives of the people and was conveyed in a format they could understand.

2.5 Theoretical framework

2.5.1 Definition

According to (Bell, 2010:105) "theory has been explained as being a set of interrelated abstract propositions about human affairs and the social world that explain their regularities and relationship. It can be a taxonomy, which is a descriptive categorical system, constructed to fit empirical observations in order to describe the relationships between categories (e.g. in a health care budget: spending on acute services,, health promotion activities and so on). However, it can be and often is merely taken to refer to the current state of knowledge in a subject derived from the published literature. The label is not important, but the process of establishing a map or framework of how the research will be conducted and analysed is." Bell (2010:106) went further to point out that frameworks were efficient mechanisms for drawing together and summarizing accumulated facts. The linkage of findings into a coherent structure makes the body of accumulated knowledge more accessible and, thus, more useful to both practitioners who seek to implement findings and to researchers who seek to extend the knowledge

base. So, a theoretical framework is an explanatory device which explains either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied – the key factors, constructs or variables – and the presumed relationships among them”.

2.5.2 The importance of a general model of information – seeking behaviour

Library and information science scholars have provided several models that have enabled the identification of information needs and information – seeking behaviour over the last decades and this study of the information – seeking behaviour of the Amsterdam community was based on some of those studies. These models provided a groundwork for studying and understanding information needs and information behaviour and have relevance in the information – seeking behaviour of the economically disadvantaged community of Amsterdam. Wilson (1997:552) points out that “any analysis of the literature of information – seeking behaviour must be based upon some general model of what might be called “information behaviour”. A study of information –seeking behaviour must have a framework for thinking about the problem and may evolve into a statement to the stage of specifying relationships among theoretical propositions. The general model of information – seeking behaviour enables the formulation of empirically testable propositions regarding the nature of relationships of the factors that affect information – seeking behaviour, personality, work – related behaviour and the environment (Wilson, 1999:250). By using a model, the reader is able to receive the abstract picture of the relationships that exists between the factors identified and the variables that have been schematically laid down to assist our thought process. It was in view of the above contributions that the General Model of Information – Seeking Behaviour was adopted as the theoretical framework for the study of the information – seeking behaviour of the economically disadvantaged community of Amsterdam in the Mkhondo Municipality of the Mpumalanga Province.

2.5.3 Theories available in the literature of information – seeking behaviour

Previous research

There are theories on information – seeking behaviour that are too numerous to use in a thesis of this nature. For this reason, only four of these theories are used in this thesis to clarify the issues at stake.

- Dervin's Sense – Making theory: It developed over a number of years and was not simply a model of information – seeking behaviour but also a set of assumptions, a theoretical perspective, a methodological approach, a set of research methods, and a practice designed to cope with information perceived as a human tool that is intended for making sense of a reality assumed to be both disordered and orderly (Wilson, 1999:253)

Dervin's Sense – Making theory was implemented in terms of four constituent elements:

- A situation in time and space: This defines the context in which information problems arise
- A gap; It identifies the difference between the contextual sequences and the desired situation (e.g. uncertainty)
- An outcome: The consequences of the Sense – Making process
- A bridge. It closes the gap between a situation and an outcome.

According to (Dervin, 1983) the term Sense – Making is used both to designate the approach (called the sense – making approach) and the focus of the approach (how people make sense of their worlds). Sense – making as an approach is primarily a methodology, providing a conceptual framework within which to specify what aspects of situations ought to be attended to and how. Sense – making attempts to provide a systematic approach to listening to an audience – how they perceive their situations, past, present, and future – and how they move to construct sense and make meaning of these situations. Dervin presents that Sense – making as resting on the discontinuity premise. It assumes that, given discontinuities in natural reality and in human observations of reality, the useful research focus is how to make sense of discontinuity.

The core construct of sense – making is the idea of the gap – how people define and bridge the gaps in their everyday lives.

- Ellis (1989) in a study on the derivation of a behavioural model for information retrieval system, used semi – structured interviews for data collection and Glaser and Strauss’s grounded theory for data analysis. The research resulted in a pattern of information – seeking behaviour among social scientists that included six generic features:
 - Starting: the means employed by the user to begin seeking information, for example, asking knowledgeable colleagues
 - Chaining: following footnotes and citations in known material or forward chaining from known items through citation indexes
 - Browsing: semi – directed or semi – structured searching
 - Differentiating: using known differences in information sources as a way of filtering the amount of information obtained
 - Monitoring: keeping up – to – date or current awareness searching
 - Extracting : selectively identifying relevant material in an information source(Meho and Tibbo,2003:570)

Meho and Tibbo (2003:571) also acknowledge the fact that Elli’s model has similarities with other influential models such as Kuhlthau (1993), particularly in terms of the various types of activities or tasks carried out within the overall information – seeking process. The strength of Elli’s model as with Kuhlthau’s is that it is based on empirical research and has been tested in subsequent studies. (Wilson,1999:254).

- Kuhlthau’s (1988) model of information search process (ISP): The model of information search process explains users’ experience in the process of information – seeking as a series of thoughts, feelings, and actions. According to Kuhlthau, thoughts that begin as uncertain, vague, and ambiguous become clearer, more focused, and specific as the search process progresses. Feelings of anxiety and doubt turn into confidence and certainty. Through their actions, people seek information relevant to the general topic in the beginning stages of the search process and pertinent to the focused topic toward closure. Formulation of a focus or a

personal perspective of the topic is a pivotal point in the search process. At that point, feelings shift from uncertain to confident, thoughts change from vague to more clear and interest increases. The model reveals a search process in which a person is seeking meaning in the course of seeking information. From the user's perspective, the primary objective of information seeking is to accomplish the task that initiated the search, not merely the collection of information as an end in itself. The ISP presents seeking information as a means to accomplish a goal.

The model of the ISP is articulated in a holistic view of information seeking from the user's perspective in six stages:

- Initiation: when a person first becomes aware of a lack of knowledge or understanding and feelings of uncertainty and apprehension are common
 - Selection: when a general area, topic, or problem is identified and initial uncertainty often gives way to a brief sense of optimism and a readiness to begin the search.
 - Exploration: when inconsistent, incompatible information is encountered and uncertainty, confusion and doubt frequently increase and people find themselves "in the dip" of confidence
 - Formulation: when a focused perspective is formed and uncertainty diminishes as confidence begins to increase.
 - Collection: when information pertinent to the focused perspective is gathered and uncertainty subsides as interest and involvement deepens.
 - Presentation: when the search is completed with a new understanding, enabling the person to explain his or her learning to others or in some way put the learning to use (Kuhlthau, 2004:82).
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- Wilson's global model of information behaviour (1996:257)

This model is a major revision of the 1981 model. The model draws upon the research findings from a variety of fields other than information science, They include decision-making, psychology, innovation, health communication and consumer research (Wilson, 1999: 256). According to Wilson, the basic framework of the 1981 model still

persists, in that the person in the context remains the focus of the information needs. The barriers are represented by intervening variables, and the information-seeking behavior is identified. Intervening variables serve to suggest that their impact could be supportive of information use or become a hindrance. Information-seeking behaviour is shown to consist of more types than was envisaged, where the active search is the focus of attention; information processing and use is shown to be a necessary part of the feedback loop, if information needs are to be satisfied.

Three relevant theoretical ideas presented in the model are:

- Stress / coping theory, (Wilson,1997: 554) was defined as “a relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and as endangering his or her well – being”. Coping on the other hand, is a cognitive and behavioural effect to master, reduce or tolerate the internal and external demands that are created by stressful situations”. Wilson cautions that we should think of the statement, “endangering his or her well – being” in a very general term; that is, the threat to well – being, and consequent stress, may be minimal in many cases and may not be conceived as such by the person in question. It offers possibilities for explaining why some needs do not invoke information seeking.
- The risk / reward theory, as presented by Wilson (1997: 562), may be considered a general theory of information – seeking behaviour. According to him, the risk / reward are associated with issues of financial cost, but as he also explained, in setting out for information in any context, we may be risking not only financial resources but also psychological and physical resources.

He suggests that active search occurs when the risk or uncertainty associated with the product is high, as in the case of a major product or the purchase of an innovative product. The amount and nature of the perceived risk (in terms of uncertainty about a product) will define the information needs: consumers who perceive high risk will seek more information. The underlying proposition, according to Wilson is that high risk is associated with high reward – if only the reward of diminishing the risk. This explains which sources of information may be used more than others by a given individual.

- The social learning theory is derived from the ideas of the stimulus response theory. Its central construct is self – efficacy (or a sense of personal mastery). Wilson, (1997: 563), explains this as follows:

“Outcome expectancy is defined as a person’s estimate that a given behaviour will lead to certain outcomes. An efficacy expectation is the conviction that one can successfully execute the behaviour required to produce the outcomes. Outcome and efficacy expectations are differentiated, because individuals can believe that a particular course of action will produce certain outcome, but they entertain serious doubts about whether they can perform the necessary activities such information does not influence their behaviour.” There is therefore, a clear link between self – efficacy and coping strategies. This model is concerned with the generalized behaviour surrounding the actual initiation of information-seeking and with a broader perspective of the information search than simply the use of computer–based information retrieval systems.

According (Niedzwiedzka, 2003:3 - 4), “Wilson assumed two propositions. First, that information needs are secondary needs, caused by primary needs, which in accordance with definitions in psychology can be defined as physiological, cognitive, or affective. Cognitive needs arise as an attempt to find sense and order in the world, and are the realization of a need to explain and make sense out of phenomena. Also, they can be stimulated by common, non – utilitarian curiosity. The rise of a particular need is influenced by the context, which can be the person him or herself, or the role the person plays in work and life, or the environments (social, political, economical, technological, etc.). The elements of the context intertwine; sometime they condition each other, which was underlined in the earlier version of Wilson’s model of (1981).”

The theoretical framework used in this study is based on the Wilson’s model of information behaviour (1996). The expansion and inclusion of other theoretical models of behaviour makes it a richer source of hypotheses on the studies of information behaviour by inculcating research from a variety of disciplines other than information science. The disciplines include decision – making, psychology, innovation, health communication and consumer research. According to Wilson,

the basic framework of the 1981 model persists, in that, the person in context remains the focus of the information needs. The model is based on two propositions: that an information need is not a primary need, but a secondary need that arises out of needs of a more basic kind and secondly, that in the effort to discover information to satisfy a need, the enquirer is likely to meet with barriers of different kinds. Wilson suggests that the barriers that could impede the search for information may also arise out of the same set of contexts. Wilson's revised global model of information behaviour has been cited by many studies in the journals of the ISI databases, as well as in numerous book chapters, reports, and conference proceedings. The majority of the ISI citations are in English language library/information journals, with a small number in broadcasting and communication sources.

Scanning the cited articles showed that some are theoretical and methodological in character, while others report studies of information users and information needs in variety of settings:

- Engineers
- Ugandan entrepreneurs
- Migrant farmworkers
- Orphans and vulnerable children in Namibia
- Disadvantaged communities
- Food consumers
- Agricultural managers
- Rural women in Nigeria and many others (Bawden (2006:672).

The researcher therefore chose this theory because it describes the person in the context of information – seeking, need and use and the work or role – related and environmental factors that could stimulate or hinder information seeking. It allows the inclusion of personal and psychological factors as well as the context of information need, seeking and use and secondly, it is very simple to understand and apply. According to Mnubi – Mchombu and Ocholla, (2011:3), the model underscores the importance of the personal, social and environmental roles that stimulate the need for information. Due to the environment and social

factors such as poverty, the distance from Amsterdam to the nearest town, the youths and other members of the community find access to information difficult for personal and community development.

Factors that influence information needs, seeking and use have been very central in the studies involving users of information. The reason is that differences were found in the use of information sources and types among professionals, rural and urban communities, academics and in the business sector. Factors that influence information – seeking identify those differences either with the person involved in the information – seeking, the work or the occupation and the role one has to play in any given circumstance or the environment of the person (Ugwu,2008:1 – 2).

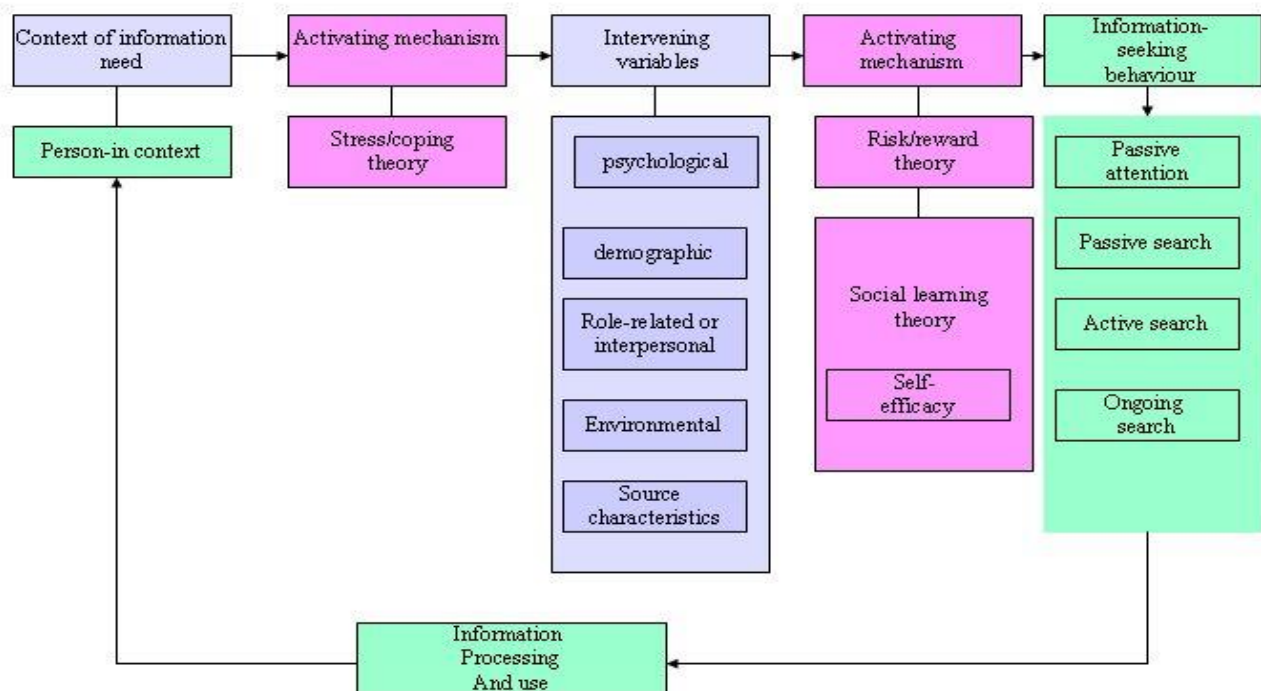


Table 2-1: Wilson's general model of information-seeking behaviours

Source: Wilson's model of information – seeking behaviour (1996:257).

In applying Wilson's Information Behaviour Model to the study, the researcher theorized that Amsterdam community's information –seeking, need and use could be

impeded or enhanced based on the factors such as personality, work – role and the environmental conditions present in the community. The researcher incorporated the Information Behaviour Theory of Wilson, to theorize that personality, work–related and environmental factors, such as motivation, interest, attitudes towards literature and media, reading ability and other user skills, and receptivity had great influence on the information-seeking behaviour of a user group or community like Amsterdam. Wilson (2000:53) set out the contextual and individual variables affecting the use of information by organizational decision makers. The variables identified by Wilson include communication networks, roles, information availability); (quantity, quality, saliency, content, form and creditability; and individual information processing variables perceptual set, criteria used, and processing style. This theory has been accepted and used widely in many similar studies (Agarwal, 2011; Bawden 2006; Fisher and Julien, 2011; Fulton, 2010; Julien and Williamson, 2010; Lay, 2005; Mnubi – Mchombu and Ocholla, 2011; O’Leary, 2011; Sina, 2010)

2.6 Information services to the economically disadvantaged: Community library perspective

2.6.1 Community information

Community information is described as information everyone needs to successfully cope with the various roles he or she has to play in his or her community (Gericke *et al*, 1996:108) The emphasis is on the information that would enable the rural populace to be in full control of themselves.

Library scholars are of the opinion that community information and community librarianship came into being as a result of the failure of public libraries in addressing the vast information needs of the majority of rural poor. The passive nature of public libraries mainly favours the middle class and those who have enough reading and writing skills, the literates, instead of catering for every group including the newly – literates and illiterates in the community. Community Information (CI) is not primarily

about increasing the flow of general information to the public (although it may contribute towards this). It is rather more concerned with specific needs that arise from a social context, which creates inequalities in access to society's resources, including information. Community library and information services are libraries and information services established, funded or maintained by a province or municipality to provide library and information services to the public (South African Community Library And Information Services Bill,2010:4).

Community information is more concerned with a detailed type of information that targets a specific area, suburb or group of people. The distinguishing feature of community information from other types of information provision is the emphasis on local information. Information for the local community is expected to originate mostly from within the community. It is usually repackaged from a variety of documents, and can be from oral communication, pamphlets, or even from any particular activity organized by the local people. Local communities are expected to produce their own information with the help of community developers or librarians (Dent, 2006:18). It could therefore be said that community information targets a specific community's information needs.

Decades of economic, political and social deprivations in South Africa, have dislocated communities. The rural traditional system of communication was disrupted, and this twisted the way of life of the black people. The black majority were denied basic education and library services. The township and rural people are still not able to access everyday information because such services in most cases are not available (Ngubeni, 2004:49).

2.6.2 Nature and the role of community libraries

According to Ajidahun (2011:1), the library, irrespective of its form, status or typology of classification has profound potency in bringing cultural, political and socio – economic empowerment to the society. Fagbola, Uzoigwe and Ajegbomogun (2011:2) also stated

that the library, as a conduit for information, serving a wide spectrum of information seekers, has a critical role to play in the facilitation of knowledge generation; hence, an unhindered access to knowledge is essential in a development process. It serves as a liberator from poverty and deprivation and as a springboard in the quest for innovation and change.

The nature of resources provided and the nature of the clientele differentiates the community library from other libraries. A community information centre should be a facility where community information is adequately housed for the convenience of the community members. This is information that is needed by everyone in the specific rural area to cope successfully with the various roles he or she has to play within the community. Community information services aim at providing information that would enable the rural people deal with their designated roles within that community (Jiyane,2002:29)

Rural communities all over Africa abound with their own information and knowledge base; which comes in the form of local poetry,, norms, mores of the people, folklore, traditional music with local history and local values. The dependence on oral traditions means that people commit most of the traditions to memory. The elders of the village usually pass on this knowledge to the younger generation who eventually grow to become adults and the sequence continues from generation to generation (Meyer, 2009:8 – 9). Information provided must strictly focus on the real needs of the people. The community information or community resource centre is about local information and this information has been identified by many researchers in the field of library and information science as;

- Health information specifically related to common diseases;
- Economic information to enhance small business endeavors and income generating activities;
- Information to support self – governance, self – management, and leadership;
- Environmental preservation and renewal; and
- Literacy education (Dent, 2006:19).

A generalized list which contains the key needs includes, labour, housing, transport, community and educational services and should be classified as social, political and economic information needed by the rural people for their day – to – day survival.

Community information covers all aspects of life to support the community members in their quest for self – actualization. Survival information is regarded as a necessity for the rural poor because of their economic dispositions relating to aspects, such as health, childcare, housing, finance, Legal and political rights. Citizens' action information is needed for effective participation in the social, political, legal and economic processes, either as an individual or as part of a group. It can be facilitated by inputs from within the community. It is necessary for them take complete ownership of such projects to guarantee acceptability, and also to enable them initiate and champion whatever project they deem useful in the community. There are many models of community or resource centres to choose from. The important issue to bear in mind is the need to tailor or design such centres with the community in mind. It must reflect the total lifestyle and well – being of the rural people concerned.

Services must cover information, facilities, stock, training and outreach programmes (Jiyane,2002:28). Jiyane points out that the situation a person finds him or herself in, roles and tasks to fulfill, problems to solve and decisions to take, create goals which result in information needs at different levels, such as cognitive, affective, social, spiritual and physical.

In a study conducted in selected rural communities in Oyo State, Nigeria on Librarians' initiated HIV/AIDS prevention intervention efforts, Awoyemi and Olaniyi (2013:13) pointed out that professionals could play dual roles as both advocates and educators in the process of AIDS information dissemination. The authors also believed that information resource officers should be sourced among rural dwellers and be trained to provide relevant and accurate information in indigenous languages.

A community library therefore, should be the centre or nucleus of activities in the community – with facilities available in addition, for meetings, film shows, discussions,

educational and literacy classes, and activities geared towards getting the children occupied during their school holidays. The political, cultural, economic and other social engagements should revolve around the library to increase its visibility and ingrain it into the consciousness of the people (Dent,2006:18 – 19).

Abdulkarim (as cited in Olarongbe and Ademolake, 2013:5), maintains that community libraries are expected to play an indispensable role in the life of the community they serve. The author refers to the following: the promotion of a reading culture, the provision of a good information and reference centre for the masses, the building of collections that relate to local interests, and the offering of different kinds of services to users such as; reference, extension, audiovisual and training services.

It should provide people – oriented services, aimed at satisfying the public through the provision of appropriate resources and services, such as advisory services, strategic leadership, and information on local content that incorporates indigenous knowledge systems into it. He also suggested that a community library should be controlled, owned and sustained by the residents to motivate, empower and enable the local people to participate in projects aimed at meeting their needs and to develop networks that benefit the community (Olarongbe and Ademolake, 2013:13 – 14).

2.6.3 Nature of the clientele

The Amsterdam community is disadvantaged because it has low economic potential, low literacy levels, and the absence of basic infrastructure which include information resources and agencies (Meyer, 2009: 4). For example, in Amsterdam, the community members are unaware of information resources that could benefit them. They are mostly illiterate, and have limited their access to information. The young school leavers in the community are not able to access information for further education and the rest of

the community lives in abject poverty. There is an absence of businesses and industries in the community (Gericke,2002:39 – 40)

They can easily be misled or conned because of their lack of useful information inadequate field of experience and weak cognitive abilities. The rural people are mostly dependent on indigenous systems and oral communication to access and use information. The circumstances in the rural communities such as poverty, illiteracy and total lack of infrastructure has contributed to making the lives of the rural communities unbearable (Meyer, 2009: 4).

2.6.4 Community profiling (survey)

A community library means different things to different people and its services differ according to the needs of specific communities. The available literature attributes a variety of characteristics to community libraries. Unlike public libraries, community libraries are established and funded at the behest of the community through resources made available by the community or they are funded by either the provincial or municipal authorities with the full blessing of the community (South African Community Library And Information Services Bill,2010; Ogunshola,2011).

Zaverdinos – Kockott (2004:13) defines a community as a group of people united by one or more factors such as geographical location, religious or political beliefs, demographic characteristics (age, sex, class), needs, interests and activities. She also

remarks that communities should not be lumped together as one indivisible entity; and that communities' internal diversity and homogeneity must be considered.

Cooperation between the librarian and the community should be considered a very important ingredient for any communication to be effective. Effective communication on the other hand, can work only when the librarian and other stakeholders have a sound knowledge of the people and their needs. Community information is more concerned with a specific area, neighbourhood or group of people.

Most rural development projects have failed abysmally mainly because of the manner in which information is communicated. The absence of community surveys and consultation by developers, the importation of the Western model of library without due consideration to the indigenous communication system of the rural people, and also the lack of social capital in most of the rural communities have contributed to the low use of libraries in general (Hart,2007:15; Dent,2006: 18; Nyana, 2009:13; Meyer,2009:7). Library science scholars and researchers have stressed the need to involve local people, for rural service development to be successful in the long – term. The rural people must be involved not only in researching their needs but also in establishing the services, the involvement of the community must be such that they own any project in the community and not as one of 'those projects' from the government.

The nature of the community needs and the suitable services to be provided should be arrived at by means of consultation and participative research with community representatives. The members of the community must decide the value of information jointly while the existing local information networks must be supplemented. The community library, as a catalyst for rural empowerment, must ensure that survival information and citizens' action information are provided proactively (Nnadi and Gurstein,2007:3).

Gwang (2011:3) referred to the community survey as diagnosis and customization and believe it is fundamental in planning consideration that could enhance the effectiveness

of the library and information services provided. It should be geared towards the elimination of waste of resources associated with library provision, which is not customized. Therefore, Gwang suggests that, for available library and information services to be relevant, it must be founded on a diagnosis of the needs of the target user community. It is also necessary because rural communities' information needs are largely hidden and not much has been discovered by researchers (Manssor and Kamba, 2010:1).

2.6.5 Community librarianship

Public libraries in Africa are modeled on the Western system of libraries and librarianship and therefore have failed to contribute to rural development.; The needs of the rural people in meeting their information requirements have remained a pipe dream (Nyana, 2009:9 -10). African communities accepted the concepts of public libraries from the outset. Since communities were starting to appreciate education, they welcomed the establishment of public libraries to help them satisfy their educational and information needs. These expectations did not materialize, in spite of support from the communities and the quantitative expansion they recorded at the beginning (Nyana, 2009:9). It is widely acknowledged by library science scholars that no proper development can take place in the rural or even urban centres without the subsequent provision of adequate information to the people.

The other dimension that has received comments is that of the training and capacity building of librarians. The manpower needed to propel this particular information crusade is not in a good shape. Most librarians are yet to move away from the old paradigm that seems to have worked well for the literate few in society. Community librarianship is much more than the mere provision of information. It also involves identifying, interpreting and evaluating the needs of different ethnic groups as well as working with community and voluntary associations and agencies to promote and develop services (Ogunshola, 2011:2).

Hart (2007:21) attests from her 2004 study in Mpumalanga, that only 17 of staff (30.3%) in charge of public libraries had a formal post – Matriculation professional qualification ,mostly a diploma or a degree in Library and Information Science. Only one of the 17 professionally qualified staff reported some exposure to the concept of information literacy education in his degree coursework.

The same opinion is shared by Meyer (2009:3), when she laments the absence of information scientists, who are conversant with the information behaviour of different user groups, getting involved in rural development projects that deal with the socio-economic circumstances of the rural poor.

The level of poverty in the community spells out the actual duties of a community librarian. He/ she must approach his / her job with new attitudes and social skill that is essential to serve rural people with cultural and language barriers (Aitcheson, 2006:96). Aitcheson believes that such a person must be a highly motivated person and a good communicator who should be able to bring together the various channels of communication within the community to inform the people adequately. There should be an identified set of norms that must characterize community libraries. As enumerated earlier, they were established at the request of and with the full participation of a community, managed and funded by community efforts. The nature of the community needs and the appropriate service to be provided must be arrived at by means of consultations.

Considering the urgent need for effective rural development, developers have shown some examples of community libraries that have changed the lives of the people for the better. As indicated earlier in the literature, the environment of the local people must be analysed properly for a better understanding. In general, the objective of profiling the community is to get to know the community as a whole – including its socio – economic and political features, its culture and traditions, its leadership and power structure, its economic potential and how its resources are distributed and the nature of its local institutions and decision – making processes (Gericke,2002:39)

The desperate need for the provision of information that empowers the rural people can only be realized when proper training and education is provided to the librarians

involved with such services. A librarian, from the view point of Nyana (2009:17), must be knowledgeable in print and oral culture to be able to make appropriate decisions with regard to the needs of rural communities and to provide effective formats that successfully convey the needed messages to the people.

Librarians working in the rural areas should recognise the effective methods of transferring information to the community. Earlier, it was pointed out that such a librarian must be knowledgeable in oral transmission. This mode of communication works well when structured as part of group discussions, person – to person communication, and other forms of indigenous learning processes such as drama, poetry, songs and group dances. The quality of information that is disseminated to the rural people could successfully transform the community. The parameters of quality information include relevance, accuracy, sufficiency, and timeliness. A lack of these qualities could hinder the reliability and acceptance of information (Ibrahim and Sani, 2012:3).

2.6.6 Sources and channels of information available to the economically disadvantaged

According to Bronstein (2010:1 – 2) the interactions users choose to make with information sources, or in other words, their preferences for some information sources over others available to them is greatly significant in the understanding of user's information – seeking behaviour. Bronstein also confirms that the reasons users select a specific information source have become important because of the developments in the field of information in the past decades.

“The notion of accessibility has been a central idea in the study of source preference in the literature and it has been defined in different ways over the years. Several studies have found that information sources that are easier to use are perceived as more accessible and will be used more frequently than less easy to use sources. This premise explains the users' preference for easy to use and accessible sources such as informal communication and personal collections. Besides ease of use, time constraints appear to be an influential parameter in the accessibility of the source”.

For rural people to access information they require appropriate information sources. Information sources should be points where information can be accessed. The sources may be people and organizations; and may be in print or electronic format. Information could come from either internal or external sources. Internal information sources originate from within a particular organization or community while external information sources originate from the outside. In most cases both internal and external sources of information may be dominant (Mtega and Roland, 2013:69).

Odini, (cited in Kamba, 2009:15) in his study maintains that in rural communities in Africa, oral communication from neighbours, family and friends tends to be the primary sources of information due to a shortage of organized information services.

Ocholla (2006: 4- 5) also stated that, although information can be accessed textually, electronically, visually, audibly and orally, most information poor communities prefer information orally and such information should be provided closest to them by sources familiar to them such as colleagues, neighbours, relatives and friends, as many other related studies have shown.

According to Johnson (2004:1) it is an almost universal finding in studies investigating human information behaviour that people chose other people as their preferred source of information. Studies of academic researchers in both the sciences and the humanities have revealed the importance of consulting with colleagues at different stages of their research. Professionals, such as engineers, nurses, physicians and dentists rely on co – workers and knowledgeable colleagues in their search for work – related information. Personal sources are also among the most important sources consulted by chief executive officers during their environmental scanning. Studies of ordinary citizens' preferred sources of information also confirmed the importance of personal contacts in information – seeking behaviour. The poor, as well, prefer interpersonal sources to other sources of information.

In a study conducted by Mtega (2012:6) it was found that the ownership of information sources like television sets, mobile phones and print sources depend much on the levels of income of the information seeker. Some occupational categories: researchers, teachers, tutors, accountants, a few farmers, and businesspersons are in a better

position to own mobile phones and television sets. Those who do not own such information tools have to either borrow from friends and relatives or use paid services from phone shops (in the case of mobile phones). Some others who do not have television sets, watch television programmes from relatives' homes or in bars and clubs. People who cannot afford to buy newspapers and magazines borrow from those who manage to buy them.

2.6.7 The main gaps isolated in the literature

Availability and accessibility of information

Aguolu (cited in Byamugisha *et al.*, 2008:1) observes that the availability of information does not necessarily mean it is accessible. The author asserts that, despite the sheer volume of information today, in a myriad of formats, as well as the obstacles of illiteracy, lack of awareness of the need for information, distance, and poverty have contributed to making complete access impossible.

Acquisition of information is primary, but there is no guarantee of its accessibility for use by the rural people. Accessibility to information should be about nearness, ease of use and opportunity for interaction with people and other agencies. Proximity and physical distance to a source or channel have been found to be factors that influence the use of information. Iwara (2013:14) also identified a lack of access to information as a major problem that can hinder effective utilization of information by most rural dwellers.

According to Uga (2007: 2- 3), library experts have identified various obstacles to information access and use:

- Lack of awareness

Information seekers and users may not be aware of the resources available. It should be the role of libraries to market their products to the community and in so doing create the necessary awareness of the services they provide. Some libraries and librarians concentrate on traditional resources and services, which may in themselves be obstacles to information access and use (Kamba, 2009:15)

- Inaccessibility

According to Uga (2007:1), a library's success depends on the availability of information resources. It is not enough that they are available, or even bibliographically accessible; they must be physically accessible to those who needed them. Uga also identifies two kinds of failure in library use: stock failure and reader failure. Stock failure, as the author reiterated, is a library's failure to acquire or produce the material needed by the patrons. Reader failure has two aspects: bibliographic and physical. The bibliographic aspect involves reader's inability to find the item sought in the library catalogue. The physical aspect has to do with the failure to locate the materials housed in the library. Uga (2007:2) identifies the reasons for inaccessibility as follows:

- Users do not know precisely what they want; if they do, they cannot articulate their needs accurately to library staff.
- The bibliographic or intellectual access to the content of the library is inadequate owing to a poor indexing system in the library catalogue or of the collection itself
- The circulation policy of the library is inefficient, shelving methods are inadvertent, and guides to the library arrangement are lacking
- Unnecessary physical and administrative barriers are imposed on the use of the library material by the library management

According to Mansoor and Kamba (2010:2), a number of barriers also affect access to information in rural communities, such as:

- Infrastructural problems. Problems like lack of power supply, good roads for transport can translate to poor information dissemination to the community concerned. Internet and social networking infrastructures should be made available to people, especially to those who geographically isolated. They also have to connect to the world with the new technologies available.
- Lack of proper information services.

Lack of proper information policies and governance directed to rural communities account for the poor information services available. The government must have a sound information policies that will target the rural people in particular and public in general. The fact is that the government of the day has the responsibility of making sure that

every citizen accesses information freely as prescribed by the World Summit of the information society, which has reaffirmed freedom of expression and universal access to information as cornerstones of inclusive knowledge society. The UNESCO's mandate as set out in its 1945 Constitution specifically calls on the organization to "promote free flow of ideas by word and image". This mission is reflected on UNESCO's Medium Term Strategy Medium - Term Strategy for 2008 - 2013 (34/C4), and particularly in its strategic programme objectives of enhancing universal access to information and knowledge. The UNESCO's mission statements clearly outline the aspect that concerns information and communication very vividly. UNESCO clearly supports that people can never develop without focused and targeted information. The acknowledgement that to build an inclusive knowledge societies can only be achieved through information and communication is a step forward in recognizing the prominent roles access to information has and will continue to play in the sustainability of rural communities.

- Low levels of literacy in the rural community.

Halder, Roy and Chakraborty (2010: 42) see information seeking as a problem solving process, which, in most cases, can become an active and changeable process that not only depends on the situation but also on the individual that seeks information. Personality is regarded as the driver of behaviour, as an important mechanism that guides behaviour. They hold the opinion that the reasons behind different information approaches might lie in the context; i.e. the person's inner processes, information habits, needs, cognitive abilities, learning outcomes and personality traits.

The rural dwellers are mostly people with little or no education to fall back on. Illiteracy levels in the rural communities have been identified as the main issue militating against access to information for the rural people. With that recognition of the relationship between illiteracy and lack of information or even information awareness, researchers like Meyer (2009:9); Nyana (2009:10 - 12) have various called for the use of local languages and symbols in communicating relevant information to the people.

- Lack of technical competencies is all factors that militate against access to information in the rural communities. The study dealt extensively with the need for librarians and other information service providers to be people with sound knowledge of rural areas. It is important to point out that the rural dwellers have enormous information needs due to many factors such as poverty, illiteracy, lack of information awareness, accessibility, and availability of information, the list cannot be exhausted in this study. The rural people are also in this vicious cycle of information glut because competent people with good knowledge of rural information refuse to work in the rural areas and that is where the lack of technical competencies come in. A competent information provider should be able to know the importance of rural information needs assessment. It is only a competent person that will be able to know what repackaging of information is all about. The illiteracy and the poverty levels in the rural areas mean that the community members are limited in everything and therefore the need for repackaging of information to reduce the cost of accessing information and also to cater for the illiterate. The literature has shown that rural people can access information more when the emphasis on foreign language is reduced. Information should be available in ones native language. It is important to have frequent rural information needs assessment before providing information services to rural areas (Mtega,2012:1 -5).

If we work from the premise that information is an essential building block for the generation of new information, restricted access to information means stifled production of new information. Moreover, if it continues over a period the world would begin to retrogress (IFLA Presidential Meeting, 2011:160). This would translate into limited new information to address new problems. The available Information could be so expensive that only a few in the community could afford to 'purchase' the needed information. In an environment where information is only accessible to a few who can afford it, anarchy

would rule. The 'uninformed' do not have sufficient information to lodge any meaningful challenge to the order of the day. For example, the recent challenges to governments in North Africa were the result of access to information. Though it was through informal methods using social networking technologies, it demonstrated the significance of sharing information. It equipped the citizenry with information to lodge a challenge, to express their needs and demand changes to improve their lives. Open sharing of information has been identified as a method of equalizing access to information. This equalizing of access to information conforms with the principles espoused by IFLA and the adherence to the Declaration on Human Rights (IFLA Presidential Meeting, 2011:160).

Similarly, the gratification theory developed specifically in research on the social world of the economically disadvantaged by Chatman (1991:438 – 449) was applied to study information - seeking behaviour of economically disadvantaged populations. In her findings, Chatman suggested that poor people seek immediate gratification because of behavioural characteristics not found in other classes. This is because they are more inclined to quick arousal, pleasure, or excitement, and they engage in activities that result in instantaneous pay – offs.” In information seeking, “gratification theory has it that, at least for poor people, information sources must be easily accessible, and respond to an immediate concern in a timely fashion”.

A study conducted by Marcella and Baxter(1999:18 - 20), also found similar patterns of sources and channels among rural respondents in the United Kingdom. According to Marcella and Baxter, the responses from the study demonstrated a continued emphasis on traditional means of approach. The data from their study also suggested that no single mechanism for enabling access to information should be seen as the ultimate solution to the information needs of citizens. In order to ensure access to basic information, a complementary range of solutions should be made available. The above study has shown that preference for friends, family and neighbours as sources and channels of information is not limited to developing communities alone. In developed countries where several information networks exist with high levels of literacy, rural

people still depend on friends, relatives and neighbours for information. It could have more to do with trust, convenience, but affordability and also the absence of alternative information service providers could be the major factor in developing communities.

The connections between communication and democratic participation can be seen as comprising three primary relationships: access to substantive information about rights and how to use them in the public sphere; access to substantive information about social and political issues for forming opinions; and channels of communication to articulate and exchange these opinions (Burnett and Jaeger,2008:3 – 4).

Mtega (2012:3) identified lack of time, inadequate access to information sources, lack of skills, cost of information and geographical isolation as the major barriers to effective use of information.

The researcher has been able to point out some of the gaps in the literature of information seeking behaviour and have addressed those gaps based on the literature

The gap as identified by Gould, Gomez and Camacho (2010:6) therefore suggests that informed decisions are not possible in the absence of the necessary and relevant information. Rural neglect brings negative consequences such as the exodus of rural dwellers to urban areas, with the concomitant problems of unemployment, crime, prostitution, child labour, spread of diseases, and overstretching of the facilities and infrastructure in the urban areas (Harande, 2009: 1). Harande, therefore, reiterated that development can only be effective if rural dwellers have access to the relevant, diverse information for their activities. The interactions between the sources and choices of the users are very important in the study of information seeking behaviour.

2.7 Chapter summary

The core aim and objectives of the study were to understand the critical factors that affect information – seeking, need, and use of information and the sources and channels used by the economically disadvantaged in Amsterdam, in addition to understanding the roles of the library in the provision of information resources to the community by reviewing literature on both national and international ramifications of the study. The study aimed at understanding the extent to which factors such as

personality, work – related and the environmental attributes of the community could affect their information – seeking behaviour. The economic, social, cultural and political environment of Amsterdam were also identified as some of the barriers to information – seeking.

The information – seeking behaviour framework of Wilson (1996) was used to further elaborate on the nature of information – seeking, need, and use of the community members. The prosperity, progress, and development of any community depends largely on the community's ability to acquire, produce, access, and use pertinent information (Harande,2009). There was substantial proof that relevant information provided and supplied to the community members of Amsterdam in a desirable quantity and at the right time, could help in satisfying their information needs.

CHAPTER THREE

3 Research methodology

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which specific factors, such as personality, work – related and environmental factors could influence the information – seeking, need and use of the economically disadvantaged community of Amsterdam. To do this, quantitative and qualitative methods were used to answer the pertinent questions raised by the study. The quantitative method used a survey questionnaire to investigate the demographic characteristics of, age, sex, and socio – economic status of respondents. The qualitative method investigated the processes, the social and cultural contexts of the study population in Amsterdam with in – depth interviews, focus group discussions, and observation. The quantitative results enhanced generalizability, and the qualitative results helped in explaining context.

The study reviewed the relevant literature on the information seeking behaviour of rural people. The study of the factors that influenced the information – seeking behaviour of rural people, and the placement of such investigation in its proper perspective required that the study be thoroughly handled to make room for any intervention necessary to ameliorate the poor information structure of rural people. The study took the researcher and his team to ten villages out of the eighteen villages that make up Amsterdam to address the following research questions:

- What information sources are available to meet the needs of members of Amsterdam community?
- Which factors influence the rural communities' use of information?

- What is the state of library and information service provision to the economically disadvantaged in the rural community of Amsterdam?
- Does the library have any part to play in the improvement of information services the economically disadvantaged rural communities?

3.2 Research approach

Methodology in this study related to a process where the design of the research and choice of particular methods, and their justification in relation to the research, were made evident. As such, the methodology required more from the researcher than just preference or intuitive appeal to justify the choice of particular techniques of data collection and analysis. It was considered necessary to outline the philosophical and theoretical positions that informed the research process. Thus there was a requirement to outline assumptions embedded in the methodology adopted (King and Horrocks, 2010: 6 – 7).

Irrespective of what a researcher wants to find out, or wants to discover, or to acquire facts, there should be a process involved - a process of scientific enquiry, a way of learning and knowing things about the world around us (De Vos *et al.*, 2005:71).

3.2.1 Quantitative research

Quantitative research is concerned with measurement, that precisely and accurately captures aspects of the social world that are then expressed in numbers – percentages, probability values, variances ratios, etc. (King and Horrocks,2010:7).

The quantitative approach regards scientific explanation to be nomothetic (i.e. based on universal laws). It measures the social world objectively, and tests hypotheses that predict and control human behaviour. A quantitative study may therefore be defined as an inquiry into a social or human problem, based on testing a theory composed of variables, measured with numbers and analysed with statistical procedures in order to determine whether the predictive generalization of the theory holds true (De Vos *et*

al.,2005: 73 - 74). In a quantitative research, an investigator relies on numerical data to test the relationship between the variables. A typical type of research study that employs quantitative research would be an experiment or a survey study. To develop knowledge, a researcher relies on a post – positivist approach to knowledge, which implies the existence of one objective reality. The quantitative researcher tests the theories about reality, looks for cause and effect, and gathers data to test hypotheses or questions through quantitative measures (Creswell, *et al*, 2007:257)

3.2.1.1 Key characteristics

Quantitative research is characterized by three basic phases: finding variables for concepts, operationalising them in a study, and measuring them (Grix, 2010,117). Quantitative research describes the trends or explains the relationship between the variables as the main goal. The research asks specific, narrow research questions or formulates hypotheses about the variables that can be observed or measured. The sample size is usually large and is, ideally, randomly selected from the larger population to be able to generalise the results to this population. A quantitative researcher uses convenience sampling to select from the individuals who are available and willing to participate in the study. The major quantitative designs include experimental, quasi – experimental, correlational and survey designs (King and Horrocks,2010:7; Creswell, *et al*,2007:257 – 258).

Quantitative research is usually based on the use of controlled experiments. The two main advantages of a controlled experiment are in

- The isolation of the experimental variables
- The possibility of replication using different groups of subjects

Its greatest weakness (in terms of social sciences) is in its artificiality. Social process observed within a laboratory setting might not necessarily occur within a natural social setting. Initially Library Science made extensive use of the quantitative research methodology, but an increasing number of studies have moved away from this paradigm. The often heard criticism of research in information Science, is that it focuses too much on the technologies of the profession and only secondarily in building

a larger understanding and developing a strong theoretical basis for the discipline (Matchet and Maepa,2004:23). Matchet and Maepa conclude that it may be because of too much dependency on the quantitative research approach.

First, in the positivist tradition, quantitative research was adopted, which was inappropriate to the study of human behaviour. Many things were counted, from the number of visits to libraries, to the number of personal subscriptions to journals and the number of items cited in papers. This counting revealed very little insights of value into the development of theory and practice. Secondly, researchers in the field of library and information science seemed to have overwhelmingly disregarded allied work in related areas that might offer more robust theoretical models of information behaviour. Library and information science scholars have recently started appreciating the use of qualitative methods of investigation to study human behaviour. The adoption of the qualitative approach has enabled researchers in the field to find theories and models in the social sciences that could be applied to the study of information behaviour (Wilson,1999:250)

Quantitative research seeks a general description or to test causal hypotheses. It focuses mainly on measurement and analysis that can easily be replicated by other researchers. Supporters of quantitative analysis therefore regard the replication of methods as very important, because the work can, thus, be verified, which provides an air of legitimacy, reproducibility, reliability, and objectivity (Grix, 2010:118).

However, there are also many critics of quantitative research who argue that certain areas of social reality cannot be subjected to statistical measurement. According to Grix, an example here would be the concept of trust for which a combination of both quantitative and qualitative research would be more appropriate in order to understand the social and the political contexts in which such attitudes and opinions are formed (Silverman,2000:8).

The most common criticisms of quantitative researchers are:

- Researchers using a quantitative research strategy are often reluctant to move from statements of correlation to causal statements.
- Such a dependence on quantitative methods can lead to a neglect of the social and cultural context in which the variables being measured operate.

- This type of research relies heavily on concepts in the pursuit of measurable phenomena and, as we have seen, it is difficult to match concepts with their referents in the social world (for example, trust, delinquency etc)
- Quantitative research is not as value – free as many of its proponents suggest, as no one can be fully detached from any type of research, precisely because researchers are the sum total of their accumulated knowledge, which is based on certain assumptions about the world.
- Critics argue that perhaps there are some facets of human action, especially behavioural phenomena, that are difficult to capture or measure quantitatively (Babbie, 2010:287; Grix, 2010:120).

3.2.2 Qualitative research

On the other hand, stems from an antipositivistic, interpretative approach. The idiographic and holistic nature of the qualitative method are aimed mainly at understanding social life and the meaning that people attach to everyday life (De Vos *et al.*,2005:74; Babbie,2010:96).

Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Kelly (2006:272) state that quantitative research makes sense in situations where we know in advance what the important variables are, and are able to devise reasonable ways of controlling or measuring them. But what about situations in which it is difficult to say what the variables are, which ones can be said to be important, or how they should be measured ? In such cases, we need to engage in the kinds of open – ended, inductive exploration made possible by qualitative research. According to Welman, Kruger and Mitchell, (2005:188) qualitative research can, theoretically speaking, be described as an approach rather than a particular design or set of techniques. It is described as an “umbrella phrase covering an array of interpretative techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meaning of naturally occurring phenomena in the social world”. The qualitative research approach can, typically, be used to answer questions about the complex nature of phenomena and is also referred to as the interpretative,

constructivist, or postpositivist approach (Leady and Ormrod, 2005:94). Qualitative researchers are mainly after meaning. The social meaning people attribute to their experiences, circumstances, and situations, as well as the meanings people embed into texts, and other objects, are the focus of qualitative research (Hesse – Biber and levy,2011:4)

3.2.2.1 Key characteristics

Qualitative researchers collect data in the field, at the site where participants experience the issue or problem under study. They do not bring individuals into a lab (a contrived situation), nor do they typically send out instruments for individuals to complete. This up-close information, gathered by actually talking directly to people and seeing them behave and act within their context, is one of the major characteristics of qualitative research (Creswell, 2009:175).

Qualitative researchers use multiple sources of data. Researchers gather multiple sources of data, such as interviews, observations, and documents, rather than rely on a single data source. Then the researchers review all the data, make sense of it, and organize it into categories or themes that cut across all the data sources (Creswell, 2009:175).

A qualitative researcher usually explores and understands a central phenomenon, which is the concept or process explored in a qualitative research study. The research questions are normally general and broad, and the goal is to seek to understand participants' experiences with the central phenomenon. The sample size is, under normal circumstances, small and purposefully selected from those individuals who have the most experience with the studied phenomenon (Creswell, et al, 2007:259). The major qualitative designs or traditions of qualitative inquiry include the case study, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and narrative research. The qualitative researcher collects words (texts) and images (pictures) about the central phenomenon. The data is collected from people immersed in the setting of everyday life in which the study is framed. The researcher also doubles as an instrument of data collection and as a researcher who asks the participants broad, open – ended questions to allow them

to share their views about their experiences with the phenomenon (Creswell, *et al*, 2007:259).

In qualitative inquiry, the initial curiosity for research comes from real – world observations, that emerge from the interplay of the researcher’s direct experience, tacit theories, political commitments, interests in practice, and growing scholarly interests. Qualitative researchers collect data themselves through the examination of documents, observation of behaviour, or interviewing of participants. They might use a protocol – an instrument for collecting data – but the researchers are the ones who actually gather the information (De Vos *et al.*,2005,90). De Vos *et al.*, identify two main advantages of qualitative research in the study of familiar issues:

- An easier entrée and the development of a rapport: If you share your respondents lifestyle or if you are already working in the agency or organisation you seek to study, the path to acceptance and cooperation should be considerably smoother
- A head start in knowledge about the topic: If you are studying the familiar, you must already have accumulated some knowledge about the subject, either through personal or professional experience.

Studying the familiar has its own disadvantages as well; the most obvious might be the risk of being too close. Relying on familiarity and personal assumptions is natural to the human condition, but these may blind a researcher from seeking new perspectives. Fascination with the unfamiliar may be a powerful and valuable motive for research. Studying the unfamiliar may also offer several advantages. If the vantage point of an outsider may be easier, this way, the distance needed to discover implicit cultural rules and norms could also be built into the study. There would be little or no role confusion – one could enter and leave the field as a researcher.

Studying the unfamiliar had its own risks too. Just as it is possible know too much about the familiar, it is possible also to fall victim to ignorance (or even prejudice) about the unfamiliar. Stereotypes may interfere with studies of others – persons who do not share our gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or social class. To gain entrée and acceptance is far more demanding when entering unfamiliar territory. Negotiation with

formal gatekeepers as well as individual respondents may certainly engender their cooperation and trust.

Qualitative research is especially effective for studying subtle nuances in attitudes and behaviours and for examining social processes over time. The strength therefore lies in the depth of understanding it permits (Babbie, 2010:326). Babbie also viewed flexibility as another advantage of qualitative research, modification of field research design could be done at any time as opposed to the rigorous approaches involved in a survey or experiment

Qualitative research can be comparatively less expensive than other research methods. Other social science research methods might require costly equipment or an expensive research staff. (Creswell, 2009:24 – 25; Grix, 2010:122) state that the most common criticisms of qualitative research are:

- The qualitative research method is not an appropriate means of arriving at the statistical description of a large population.
- There is a perceived problem of anecdotalism, that is, the use of brief or limited examples in relation to explanations. For critics, this tends to raise questions about representativeness and generality of the piece of research.
- This inability to generalise from small samples or few cases leads to a question of the validity of results based on such research
- The immersion of the researcher in the social context he or she is studying leads to a lack of objectivity and a propensity to use personal opinion instead of evidence to support arguments (Creswell,*et al*, 2007:265;Creswell,2009:24 – 25;Babbie,2010:326; Grix,2010:122).

In recognition of the strengths and weaknesses of qualitative and quantitative methods and the aim and objectives of the study, the researcher decided to combine the two approaches. The qualitative approach facilitated the interactions that focused on the social, cultural, and economic context of the Amsterdam community, their work, and the environment where all the activities took place. The quantitative approach was adopted mainly to discover the demographic,

age, sex and other related issues. The credibility and reliability of the research was also enhanced with specific scientific methods and techniques such as the survey – based questionnaires, which maximized objectivity by using numbers, statistics, and graphs and added a little more control to the more flexible qualitative approach.

3.2.3 Combining quantitative and qualitative approaches in this study (triangulation)

The researcher triangulated the data collection instruments of the survey, focus group interviews, in – depth interviews and observation in the study of information – seeking behaviour of the Amsterdam community. The combination of the two approaches helped to remove all the biases that could have marred a study using a single approach. It facilitates the verification and validation of findings.

The triangulation process in the study of information – seeking behaviour of Amsterdam in Mkhondo Municipality, Mpumalanga Province of South Africa was based on the assumption that a combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods would cancel or neutralize biases inherent in a particular data source, method or investigator (De Vos *et al.* ,2005:361).

Stake (cited in Creswell *et al*, 2007:298), “triangulation has been generally considered as a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation”. Triangulation was adopted in the study also as a validity tool – it was necessary in the study to check the validity of research findings. Two different methods of data collection were considered more appropriate for a thorough investigation that would critically examine the same research questions and for convergence in research findings (Hesse – Biber and Leavy.2011:50).

3.3 Research design

The design of the study was specifically planned to enable the researcher obtain participants (respondents) who could give insight to the study. In this research design,

the researcher described the aim and objectives of the research and the roles of the participants, as well as how the conclusions about the research problems were reached (Welman, Kruger and Mitchell, 2005:52). The nature of the sample was decisive as it determined the statistical significance, interpreted the results, and generalized the conclusions of the study (McMillan and Schumacher,2010:140). Researchers need a more appropriate way to select people, objects, or events from which they can draw their research information. It is not feasible or logical to study the entire population in any given study. Sampling is regarded as the method of choice in a research project. Sampling can therefore be defined as the process of selecting certain members from a group to represent the entire group. A sample should be seen as a part of a whole or a subset of measurements drawn from the population (Brink, 1996:133). Researchers use sampling because it is a feasible and a logical way to make statements about a larger group (based on what the researcher knows about a smaller group). The two major sampling methods are probability and non – probability sampling

It is necessary, at this juncture, to specify the following about research design:

- The number of groups that should be used determines the statistical technique that should be adopted.
- Whether these groups are to be drawn randomly from the populations involved or whether they should be assigned randomly to a group
- What exactly does the study want to achieve with the participants (Welman, Kruger, and Mitchell, 2005:52).

Probability and non – probability samples can be distinguished in the following way: in probability samples, subjects are drawn from a larger population in such a way that the probability of selecting each member of the population is known. This type of sampling should be conducted to efficiently provide estimates of what should be regarded as true for a population from a smaller group of subjects (sample). What is described in a sample should also be true, with some degree of error, of the population (McMillan and Schumacher,2010:130). The advantage of probability sampling is that it enables us to indicate the probability with which sample results (for example sample means) deviate in differing degrees from the corresponding population values (for example population

means). Probability sampling also enables us to estimate errors (Welman, Kruger, and Mitchell, 2005:56). Examples of probability samples are:

- Simple random samples
- Stratified random samples
- Systematic samples
- Cluster samples

The strengths and weaknesses of probability sampling are:

Strengths

- Easy to understand
- Little knowledge of population needed
- Free of subject classification error
- Easy to analyze and interpret results

Weaknesses:

- Requires the numbering of each element in a non – electronic list of members of the population
- Some probability sampling techniques have larger sampling errors (for example simple random sampling and systematic sampling)
- Proportional and nonproportional stratified sampling require subgroup identification of each population element
- Proportional and nonproportional stratified sampling are also costly and it is more difficult to prepare lists of population elements in each subgroup (McMillan and Schumacher,2010:139).

Non – probability sampling does not include any type of random selection from a population. Rather, the researcher uses subjects who happen to be accessible or who may represent certain types of characteristics. Many circumstances bring people together in situations that are efficiently and inexpensively tapped for research (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010:136). Examples of non – probability samples are:

- Accidental or incidental samples
- Purposive samples
- Snowball samples
- Self – selection samples

- Convenience samples

Some of the strengths of non – probability sampling are:

- Less costly and not time – consuming
- Ease of administration
- Usually assures high participation rate
- Generalization possible to similar subjects
- Assures receipts of needed information

Some weaknesses of non – probability sampling are:

- Difficult to generalize to other subjects
- Less representative of an identified population
- Results dependent on the unique characteristics of the sample
- Greater likelihood of error due to experimenter or subject bias (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010:140).

3.3.1 Population of study

The broader the population of interest, the more generalizable the results. It should be reiterated that not all studies seek to represent a broad national or international population, more could be learned from studying more unique or specialized groups (Remlar, and Van Ryzin, 2011:141).

Table 3.1 below shows the eighteen villages that make up Amsterdam community. A study population is that aggregation of elements from which the sample is actually selected. Researchers are seldom in a position to guarantee that every element meeting the theoretical definitions laid down has a chance of being selected in the sample (Babbie ,2010:199. According to Babbie, even where lists of elements exist for sampling purposes, the lists are usually somewhat incomplete. It is important for researchers to carefully and completely define the study population. The population of Amsterdam is estimated at 14059 (Mkhondo Municipality – Albert Luthuli population information created by Statistics South Africa,2011 Census Data). The surrounding villages within Amsterdam were very rural and mostly farm dwellers, with the exceptions

of Amsterdam town, France and Kwa – Thandeka. The rest of the villages were either deep rural farming communities or just rural with high poverty and low literacy rates. The deep rural – based residents of Amsterdam still lacked the necessities of life such as electricity, good roads, water supply and other social amenities. They were mostly unemployed and relied on monthly stipends either from the government or on subsistence farming (Census Data 2001 and Main IDP document analysis phase for Mkhondo 2011 -16; Mkhondo Municipality – Albert Luthuli population information created by Statistics South Africa,2011 Census Data)..

Table 3-1: Eighteen villages in Amsterdam

1. Tokozani village	2. Stafford	3. Westoedam	4. Kamnigo	5. Sihanahana	6. Davidsforbe
7 .Matayitelene	8 .Gleneland	9. Jerichodam	10. France	11. Kwa - Thandeka	12. Amsterdam
13. Roburnia	14. Redcliff	15. Emaswazini	16. Kwanongina	17. Nerston	18. Morgazon

The eighteen villages in Amsterdam (Mkhondo Local Municipal Draft IDP, 2011 – 2016).

3.3.2 Sample procedure

Table 3.2 below shows the sample characteristics of respondents in Amsterdam community. In this study, both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used. The interview schedule was used for the youth, those who were either eager to go back to school or were in dire need of employment and the literate adults in the community. The observation was done in the library to ascertain the information needs and use of the reading public. The focus group interview was conducted with the community members from the age of 18 upward. The study targeted the population of the economically disadvantaged in Amsterdam. These groups included those who were geographically isolated, the poor, those with low literacy levels, the unemployed and the employed, the youth, the adult public (those who either needed information to sustain

their jobs, trades or businesses, and those who needed information to survive, to search for employment or to further their education in the community).

3.3.3 Sample characteristics

Table 3-2: Sample characteristics

Communities	Sample size	Gender	
Amsterdam		Male	Female
Total	238	112	126
Confidence Level 95%		Confidence Interval \pm 6.3%	

The population of Amsterdam was estimated at 14059 (Statistics South Africa 2011 Census Data). A sample size of 238 was estimated from the population of the community with the aid of Macorr Sample Size Electronic Calculator. The sample size of 112 (47%) were males, while 126 (53%) were females. It was calculated using a confidence level of 95%, and a confidence interval of \pm 6.3%. The sample size reflected the overall population of Amsterdam where the males in the community were estimated at 6600, while the females in the community were estimated at 7459. The researcher understood from the beginning that for the study to achieve the set goal, the sample size needed to be representative of the entire population.

3.4 Demographics and the socio – economic profile of Amsterdam

Created from Statistics South Africa 2011 Census Data

Table 3-3: Population of Amsterdam in Mkhondo Municipality by Gender

Communities	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Amsterdam	6600	7459	6,769	47%	53%	100

Table 3-4: Population of Amsterdam in Mkhondo Municipality by Age Groups

	0 - 14	15 - 64	65+	Total	0 - 14	15 - 64	65+	Total
Amsterdam	5207	8225	626	14058	37%	59%	4%	100

Created from Statistics South Africa 2011 Census Data

Table 3.3 above shows the population of Amsterdam community by gender. Table 3.3.1 above shows the population of Amsterdam by age groups. Most people in Amsterdam either worked in the forestry industry or were engaged in livestock farming. The unemployment rate was as high as 31%. Discouraged work seekers, that is, those who were not working but were no longer actively looking for employment were estimated at 13%. Those who did not have any means of monthly income were estimated at 56% as depicted in Table 3.2 below, according to (Statistics South Africa 2011 Census Data) and most people who were unable to start their own businesses or be assimilated into the small workforce were forced into migrant labour. The illiteracy level was also very high. Those between the ages of 19 – 24 at (58%) had already dropped out of school or never attended in the first place. There were 34 schools in Amsterdam. Out of the 34 schools, two were secondary schools, four combined schools and the remaining 28 were primary schools (Main IDP Document Analysis Phase for Mkhondo 2011-2016). Unfortunately, these schools were unable to absorb all the potential students within the community. Again, most of the schools were so far from some of the villages that most pupils and students had to walk more than 20km to get to school (Census Data 2001 and Main IDP Document Analysis Phase for Mkhondo 2011-2016). The maps of Amsterdam and the community library are in Appendix C, D, E, and F respectively.

3.4.1 Amsterdam population 5-18yrs and 19-24yrs by Present school attendance

Table 3-5: official present school attendance in Amsterdam

	Yes	100%	Yes	100%	No	100%	No	100%
	5-18yrs		19-24yrs		5-18yrs		19-24yrs	
Amsterdam community	4288	94	693	42	280	6	954	58

3.4.2 Official employment status including discouraged work – seekers in Amsterdam

Table 3-6: Official employment status of Amsterdam

Employment	2187	56%
Unemployed	1225	31%
Discouraged work seekers	503	13%
Total	3915	100%

Created from Statistics South Africa 2011 Census Data

Table 3.4 above shows the current official school attendance in Amsterdam. While Table 3.4.1 above shows the official employment status in Amsterdam. The library in Amsterdam was built during the apartheid era with a space that could accommodate less than 35 users at any given. This scenario was captured in Harts study (2007) of information literacy education readiness of Public Libraries in the Mpumalanga Province. In that study, Hart identified “shortcomings in the physical facilities, such as a lack of space and the absence of retrieval tools, with the heritage of apartheid still impacting on the availability of and quality of service”. Hart also identified “the low level of professional education of public library staff as the main factor impeding innovation in library service programmes.”

The limited library space was a serious inhibiting factor and also the fact that there was no alignment between the library and the information needs of the people. In trying to support the school curricular of the only secondary school and the two primary schools within reach, the library had the added problem of facilities and the lack of capacity to

address such issues on a large scale; not to talk of extending the needed services to the deep rural – based residents and farm schools. Some of the farm communities were between 30 to 50km away from Amsterdam town and this was a serious impediment to service delivery. The backlogs in the development of public and school library services in South Africa were enormous and required a model that would not only make public or community libraries available to the rural people but also to enable them have access to relevant information for problem – solving (Le Roux and Hendrikz,2006:1).

3.5 Data collections

The quantitative approach to data collection adopted the questionnaire – based survey design, while the qualitative approach adopted semi –structured interviews, focus group discussions, and observation. The qualitative sample was also a purposive or judgmental sample. Each data collection method and the sample used in the study had been described in detail and their advantages and disadvantages pointed out to show why they were used for the study.

The survey research used in the study provided a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of the population by studying a sample of the community members. From sample results, the researcher generalized or made claims about the population (Creswell, 2009:145). According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010:235), in survey research, the investigator selects a sample of respondents from a target population and administers a questionnaire or conducts interviews to collect information on variables of interest. Surveys are used to learn about people’s attitudes, beliefs, values, demographics, behaviour, opinions, habits, desires, ideas, and other types of information. Survey research minimizes the task involved in investigating the whole population. A survey design was carried out within Amsterdam rural communities of the Mkhondo Municipality in the Mpumalanga province of South Africa. According to Creswell *et al* (2007:155), researchers should preferably aim for optimal control over the survey environment; for example, in terms of when and at which intervals

respondents will be surveyed, the data gathering techniques to be used, the sampling strategy (e.g. how many respondents will be included), the necessity of a pilot study and follow – up administration. The strengths and weaknesses of survey research are enumerated below.

Strengths of survey research:

- Potential to generalise to large populations if appropriate sampling design has been implemented
- High measurement reliability if proper questionnaire construction has been done
- High construction validity if proper controls have been implemented (Mouton,2001:153).

Weaknesses:

- Lack of depth and insider perspective sometimes leads to criticisms of surface level analyses
- Survey data are sometimes very sample and context specific - this is especially true of public opinion polls (Mouton, 2001:153).

There are numerous data collection methods in survey research. All of them have advantages as well as disadvantages. The researcher listed some of the commonly used survey methods. A few of the most commonly used methods are:

- Group administration of questionnaires
- Postal survey
- Telephone survey
- Face – to – face survey

It should be noted that, in a study, that more than one method of survey could be used to minimize the disadvantages of a single method. Most of these approaches to research investigation are not created purposely for developing communities, and for that reason, many social science scholars have advised that researchers interested in the study of rural communities adapt some of these data collection methods in order to conduct a credible research within the rural communities (Umejesi, 2010: 108 – 109).

3.5.1 Face – to – face survey research

Table 3-7: Number of questionnaires for the face – to – face survey interview

Amsterdam community	Number of questionnaires distributed	Number of questionnaires completed by the community members
Total	251	225
Confidence level 95%		Confidence interval ±6.3%

The researcher and his assistants went from house to house for the survey interviews. It was very successful, except that a few of the respondents decided to fill the questionnaires themselves and in the process did not tick the answers as stipulated and thereby rendering some of the questionnaires unusable. The questions for the face – to – face interview are presented in Appendix B. This study dealt with the information – seeking behavior of the economically disadvantaged community of Amsterdam in the Mpumalanga Province of South Africa and a questionnaire based survey design was adopted to elicit information on the following:

- The sources and channels that the rural Amsterdam community used in meeting their information needs
- The factors that influenced the rural communities' use of information
- The state of library and information service provision to the economically disadvantaged in the rural community of Amsterdam
- The role of the library in the improvement of information services to the economically disadvantaged rural communities

The researcher and his assistants personally administered the questionnaire. Respondents who were considered literate enough to complete the questionnaires themselves or felt they could do so on their own were afforded the opportunity to do so. The questionnaires of the less literate were handled by the team using information they supplied in answer to the questions. The fact that the research team was present during the interview made the collection of data easier and more elaborate, in that, the respondents threw more light on some of the issues that were under investigation and the team was on hand to clarify whatever the respondents did not understand in the questionnaire.

The researcher used face – to – face interviews to counter the problems associated with telephone surveys, postal surveys, and group administration questionnaires.

- The face – to – face interview provided the opportunity needed to establish rapport with people and to stimulate the trust and cooperation required to probe sensitive issues.
- Questions were clarified when participants became confused
- It allowed greater flexibility in the determination of the wording and sequence of questions

It was also considered more useful because it did not need the respondents to be literate to answer the questions. In face – to – face interviews, well – trained interviewers visited the respondents, asked questions, and recorded the answers (Creswell *et al*, 2007:158).

The advantages of face – to – face interviews are as follows:

- This method has the highest response rate
- Long questionnaires can be used
- The interviewer can assist with issues that are not clear to the respondents
- Respondents need not be literate (Creswell , *et al*, 2007:158)

The disadvantages of face – to – face survey are as follows:

- The cost is usually very high
- Interviewers should be well trained

Interviewer bias is a great risk (Maree and Pietersen, 2007:158). The survey questionnaire used open – ended and closed – ended questionnaires. The two types of questionnaires, open – ended and closed – ended were combined in the questionnaires to enable the researcher examine all the dimensions in the study and to achieve reliability since it was possible to find out how community members accessed and used information and the channels of information available to them. Open – ended questions simply introduced the topic and allowed participants to respond in their own words while the closed – ended or restricted questions presented the participants with a limited number of response alternatives. Closed – ended questions typically asked the participants to select the best or most appropriate answer in a series of choices. The following are the advantages and the disadvantages of closed – ended and open – ended questionnaires:

Advantages of closed – ended questions:

- They are easy to analyze and summarize
- It is possible to obtain quantitative information from closed – ended questions by using an ordered set of response alternatives.
- Closed – ended questions are best for obtaining demographic information
- It is easier to use closed – ended questions with a large number of subjects or a large number of items (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010:198).

Disadvantages of closed – ended questions:

- No spread of responses across all response categories
- They cue respondents with respect to possible answers
- It is a more controlled approach (Rosnow and Rosenthal, 2005:112).

Advantages of open – ended questions:

- They allow an individual the greatest flexibility in choosing how to answer.
- Open – ended questions will not lead the respondent by suggesting specific answers
- They allow the person to answer in his or her own language, thereby helping to increase rapport
- The exploratory approach allows the respondent to find whether he or she has anything at all to say (Rosnow and Rosenthal, 2005:113).

Disadvantages of open – ended questions:

- They are time – consuming for both the researcher and the participants.
- They often elicit rambling and off – the – mark responses that may never actually touch on the topic the researcher is interested in.
- They may be hard to access for reliability (Rosenow and Rosenthal, 2005:113).

Open – ended questions were used to capture idiosyncratic differences in the community. For example, individual attitudes, emotions, ideas, sentiments, suggestions or opinions were all rendered in their own words. Open – ended questions were very useful to the study since the researcher was unsure of the responses he was likely to obtain.

Closed – ended questions were also used for respondents who could neither read nor write. The study took cognizance of the research location. The study was conducted in the rural area of Amsterdam where people are not highly educated and would therefore need more straightforward questions that would help overcome misunderstandings and misinterpretations of words or questions. The two approaches were combined to balance each other more effectively, as any particular issue that was not properly captured in one approach was dealt with in the other.

Before administering the survey-based questionnaire, the researcher drafted a questionnaire schedule. The questionnaire was compared with the research problem several times, partly to test consistency between the two and again to determine whether the interview schedule was thorough and correct enough to elicit the required information. The draft schedules were also pre – tested. Pre – testing helped in assessing whether additional information would be needed before the final draft was approved (Welman, Kruger and Mitchell, 2005: 168

The aim and objectives, research problems, research methods, data sources and the research instruments used in the study

Table 3-8: Aim and objectives and research problems

objectives	Research question	Research method (s)	Data source	Research instruments
To identify information needs of the members of Amsterdam community	What are the information needs of the members of Amsterdam community?	Survey Focus group	Primary and secondary sources	Questionnaire, Interview, observation
To determine the critical factors that affect the community's access to information	Which critical factors affect the community's access to information?	Focus group Survey	Primary sources	Interview, Observation, questionnaire
Find out how the rural Amsterdam members meet	How does the rural community of Amsterdam meet	Survey	Primary sources	Observation, Questionnaire ,

their information needs	their information needs?	Focus group		Interview
Suggest ways of improving library and information services in the rural Amsterdam community	What are the ways of improving library and information services in the rural community of Amsterdam?	Focus group Survey	Primary sources	Questionnaire, Observation, Interview

Table 3.6 above shows the aim and objectives and the research problems, as well as the research methods, the data sources and the research instruments used in the study. To the best of the researcher’s knowledge, this was the first time a study of this nature had been carried out with a focus on the information behaviour of the rural people of Amsterdam. The researcher chose the appropriate approach to make the voice of the people heard and enabled them to describe their world so that it was understood within their naturally occurring context. The aim was to see through the eyes of the participants and it also enabled an in depth understanding of the phenomena that were investigated.

3.5.2 Purposive sampling

Purposive sampling is regarded as the most important type of non – probability sampling. The sample is composed of elements that contain the most characteristics, representative, or typical attributes of the population. In purposive sampling, judgment is usually made based on the available information or the researcher’s knowledge about the population (De Vos *et al.*, 2005: 202). Purposive sampling was used in the study as it gave the researcher (who had lived and worked in the community for four years) the opportunity to select particular elements from the population that would be representative or informative on the topic that was investigated in the community. Based on the knowledge of the population, the researcher and his assistants (who were from Amsterdam) made a judgment about the subjects selected to provide the best information that addressed the purpose of the research. The judgment was based on

the socioeconomic status, educational levels, information - seeking, need and use, the channels and sources of information in the community, which included their information culture and environmental factors such as the, economic situations, local and organizational structures, culture, and tradition of the community. Most communities of Amsterdam live in the deep rural areas where the levels of poverty and low levels of literacy still thrived. This necessitated the use of purposive sampling, as Jiyane, (2002:29) observed in the study she conducted in the Melmoth districts. She said that the typical characteristics of the respondents were illiteracy, poverty, unemployment, farm working and households management. Jiyane was therefore convinced that a sample of 1% or 50% or 100% could be used and it would make no tangible difference. Purposive sampling accommodated the community dynamics that would not have been possible with random sampling alone.

The choice was purely based on the researcher's knowledge of the population, its elements and the purpose of the study (Babbie, 2010:193). Researchers rely on their experience, ingenuity or previous research findings to deliberately obtain units of analysis that are representative of the relevant population. Among the research questions for this study was to find out the personality, work – related and the environmental factors that affected information – seeking behaviour of economically disadvantaged in Amsterdam.

In purposive sampling, participants are selected because of some defining characteristics that make the holders of the data relevant to the study. Sampling decisions in the study of information – seeking behaviour of economically disadvantaged community of Amsterdam were therefore made purposely to obtain the richest possible source of information to answer the research questions. Nieuwenhuis (2007:79) also pointed out that purposive sampling decisions do not only restrict the selection of participants but also impact on the settings, incidents, events and activities to be included for data collection.

It was not possible to randomly sample all the adults, school leavers, the employed and the unemployed and those who lived in the deep rural areas in the villages since there was no available list for that. Again, the villages were geographically scattered.

The advantages and disadvantages of purposive sampling have already been articulated above.

3.5.3 The youth of the community

The youth of the community represented an important component of this investigation since they also needed a vast amount of information for their day – to – day activities. The youth therefore needed the services of a library and other effective information services especially in searching for information that concerned school admission and the funding for such education. The schools curricular have to be supported by an efficient community library services.

3.5.4 Focus group interviews

Sample representativeness in the study referred to how closely the sample mirrored or resembled the population. The study also adopted focus group discussions (FGD), observations, and in-depth interviews.

Focus groups discussions are one of the most widely used, and useful, methods of qualitative research. The method consists essentially of a group of interviews that include from about 6 to 12 people. The number of participants should be enough to make the discussion lively, but not too many to prevent all from participating (Remlar and Van Ryzin, 2011:67). According to Grix (2010:129) this type of interview could also be structured, semi – structured or unstructured and recorded in the same way as one – on – one interviews. It could be done either quantitatively or qualitatively. The researcher normally assumes the role of a moderator or facilitator.

Table 3-9: Focus group discussions (FGD) participants

Amsterdam community	Sample size	Gender	
		male	female
youths	18	8	10

Adults	28	13	15
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Table 3.7 above shows the composition of the focus group discussion. The focus group discussions were conducted twice; once for the youth in the community and another for the adults. The focus group conducted for the youth was held at the Youth Development Center in the community and that for the adults was done immediately after the church service on a Sunday. The participants agreed to the Sunday group meeting and it was very successful. The researcher used the two groups to reveal the impact the groups dynamics had on the data and to be able to control distinctive responses. The youth were (18) in number while the adults were (28) in number. The age range of the youth was from 18 years upward. The focus group discussions for the youth, who had finished their secondary school education, and were waiting to get information on how to proceed to higher education was held at the newly erected youth development center. Many of the youth performed well in their secondary school final year exams but did not know how to access information on further education. The focus group discussion for the adult public was done after the service on a Sunday at a church compound. The group discussions for the youth in the community lasted two and half hours while that for the adults was lasted three hours. The focus group interview strategy was based on the assumption that group interaction would be productive in widening the range of responses, activating forgotten details of experience and releasing inhibitions that might otherwise discourage participants from disclosing information (Nieuwenhuis, 2007:90). The main purpose for using it in the present study, was that focus group discussions, helped in exploring topics at great length rather than to describe or explain in any definitive sense (Babbie,2010: 323).

Strengths of focus group discussions:

- As with other types of interviews, the format allows the facilitator the flexibility to explore unanticipated issues as they arise in the discussion. The results have high “face validity: because the method is readily understood, the findings appear believable (Marshall and Rossman,2011: 149) .

- The cost of focus group interviews is relatively low. They provide quick results, and they can increase the sample size of qualitative studies by permitting more people to be interviewed at one time.
- Focus group interviews produce data rich in detail that is difficult to achieve with other research methods.

Weaknesses of focus group discussions:

- A respondent's verbal responses may be less honest, and therefore less reliable during a group interview
- Some participants experience focus groups as threatening.
- Require greater attention to the role of the moderator
- Provide less depth and detail about the opinions and experiences of any given participant (Babbie and Mouton,2001:292)

. The questions were carefully selected and phrased in advance to elicit maximum responses from all participants. The group members selected represented the target population, keeping in mind factors such as homogeneity / heterogeneity, age and gender, class, lay people and professionals, socio – economic status, literacy level, income and demographics. The intention was to seek alternative perspectives.

The researcher worked as a librarian in the community and can therefore claim to have a good relationship with the community members.

3.5.5 Observation

The researcher and his assistants used participant observation to observed 32 library users in the Amsterdam Library. It should also be noted that all the techniques for gathering data involve observation of some kind. In this study, observation was used to describe the data that were collected, regardless of the technique employed in the study. Observation as a research method refers to a more specific method of collecting information that is very different from interviews or questionnaires. As a technique for gathering information, the observational method relies on what the researcher wants to see and hear and recorded observations.

The researcher had worked in the Amsterdam community library for a number of years, and could, therefore, claim to be a familiar face in the community. A purposive sampling strategy was adopted, while the knowledge of the setting and the users of the library were used to select those who could be regarded as representatives of other library users. The researcher was not perceived as an intruder. It was important that observation be used in the research because the information was not limited to what could be recalled accurately by the subjects. The behaviour of the subjects was recorded as it occurred naturally. The observational method afforded the researcher the opportunity of observing and recording a real life situation and the collection of rich and directly observed data at relatively low costs. An insider approach was adopted and it benefited the study immensely (Cooper, Lewis and Urquhart,2004:2) The observational method was used to study the users of the library in their natural setting and after the initial observations, some worded questions were also asked by the observers. Bias was mitigated by getting more assistants involved and the observations were compared afterwards. The assistants were trained on the approach and on what to observe in the library. The issues that were observed were not complex nor did they have anything to do with right or wrong attitudes (McMillan and Schumacher,2010:208).

Observation can be used in both quantitative and qualitative approaches. In a quantitative study, the role of the observer is to remain detached from the group or process, as a complete observer. The researcher in this instance should only be concerned with observing and recording the behaviour of his or her subjects in various settings as an outsider.

In a qualitative study on the other hand, two types of observation are found, namely, simple observation where the researcher remains an outsider and participant observation, in which case, the researcher is simultaneously a member of the group he or she is studying and a researcher doing the study (Babbie and Mouton,200:1293).

The researcher and his assistants observed the need and use, the frequency of visits and the role of the library in the provision of library resources in the community library in Amsterdam. The researcher was able to rate the resources most of the users in the

library setting needed and used frequently; such as newspapers for job advertisements and for further education. The librarian in the community library also provided the researcher and his team with past users registers. This registers helped the researcher and his team to compare past library visits and memberships with what was observed during the course of the study.

The following are the major types of observable data:

- Exterior physical signs (clothing, radios, church services, consumables, etc.)
- Expressive movement (eye movements, facial expressions, bodily movements, postures, etc.)
- Physical location (the setting being observed, people's personal space, etc.)
- Language behaviour (stuttering, slips of the tongue, topics of discussion, etc.)
- Time duration (how long is the person being observed engaged in what he or she is doing?) (Babbie and Mouton, 2001:293).

Strengths of observation methods:

- It captures natural behaviour
- Mitigates social desirability, response sets, and subject effects
- Relatively unobtrusive
- Reliable for low – inference observations

Weaknesses of observation methods:

- Observational research is expensive and difficult to conduct reliably for complex behaviour.
- The problem of how the observer affects the behaviour of subjects by being present in the setting
- Time – consuming
- Requires training
- Inability to probe and clarify
- Bias is a factor in observational research (McMillan and Schumacher,2010:211)

3.5.6 Semi structured in – depth interview

The researcher and his assistants used the in- depth interview to compile lists of information needs in the community for clarity. Numerous studies in the field of library and information science have shown that the main factors hindering access to information in rural areas are illiteracy and poverty, and that most times the rural people are not aware that they have information needs and therefore are unable to articulate their needs properly (Gericke,2002:43).The researcher used semi – structured in – depth interviews with 80 respondents selected purposively among workers in various fields and in the business sectors. We interviewed police officers at the station and all those we found at other business places at the time of the interview. We also interviewed business people, health workers, and some patients at the clinic, the local municipal council, the rural men and women, etc. to gain a detailed picture of the respondent’s perception of their information needs from the activities and the processes they used in solving the needs. It allowed for more flexibility in the interactions between the researcher and the respondents. According to Nieuwenhuis (2007:87), the semi – structured interview is commonly used to corroborate data emerging from other data sources. It seldom spans a long time period and usually requires the participant to answer a set of predetermined questions. Most importantly, it allows for the researcher to probe the respondents for the clarification of answers. The semi – structured interview defines a line of inquiry. Semi – structured interviews allow the participants a strong role to determine how the interview proceeds

The strengths of semi – structure interviews:

- They are useful in getting large amounts of data quickly
- Especially effective way of obtaining depth in data
- They are a versatile way of collecting data. We can use them with all age groups (Welman, Kruger and Mitchell,2005:167)

The weaknesses of semi – structured interviews:

- Participants may be unwilling to share
- They involve personal interaction and interaction and cooperation is therefore needed

- The researcher may ask questions that do not evoke the desired responses from participants (De Vos *et al.*,2005:299).

The focus group discussion, observation conducted in the library that enabled the understanding of the feelings and opinions of library users and the in – depth interview were used in structuring the survey questionnaire. The information needs and sources and channels of information, the factors that affected the choice of sources, the availability and accessibility of information , the frequency of library visits, and the roles of the library as seen by the respondents used in the survey were extracted from the focus group discussion, observation and in – depth interview. The factors that affected or influenced information – seeking in the community, and the barriers and suggestions were all extracted from the three data gathering techniques to structure the survey questionnaire. It should be noted also that the questions in the four data gathering techniques only served as guidelines. The researcher and his assistants also had very lengthy interactions with the respondents, which were recorded with their permission.

3.6 Validity and reliability

Validity and reliability take different forms, depending on the nature of the research problem, the general methodology that the researcher used to address the problem, and the nature of the data that were collected. The study combined the quantitative and qualitative approaches in the collection of data. Social scientists differ on the approaches appropriate for the study of human behaviour based on different assumptions about the world, the research purpose, research methods prototypical studies, the role of the researcher, and the importance of context in the study (Leady and Ormrod,2010:29).

Quantitative research is based on the positivist viewpoint, which assumes that there are stable, social facts with a single reality, separated from the feelings and beliefs of individuals. Quantitative researchers use a system as a point of departure for their research and they apply the system to the phenomenon that is under investigation. For example, they use a structured schedule for interviews, or response categories in a

questionnaire or test. In this approach, a specific structure must be imposed on the phenomenon (De Vos *et al.*,2005:161 -172).

Quantitative researchers look at the phenomenon from a distance – a disadvantage being that they then have problems of accommodating behavioural manifestations that were not anticipated (Collins *et al*, 2000: 90). Quantitative researchers believe that the best, or only way properties of phenomena can be measured (e.g. the attitudes of individuals towards certain topics) is through quantitative measurement, assigning numbers to the perceived qualities of things (Babbie and Mouton, 2001:49).

This approach does not allow enough space for social contact between the researcher and respondents and therefore ignores the benefits of social interactions that should exist between the researcher and the study population. The quantitative survey works well where the population is learned to the extent where they can understand and use a survey questionnaire, since it lacks the capacity to deal with the context of social life. For instance, conducting a survey research in Amsterdam as the only data collection instrument would mean sidelining the population of youths between the ages of 19 – 24 with an illiteracy rate of 58% in Amsterdam (Statistics South Africa 2011 Census Date). That would have created a validity problem for the study. The face – to – face questionnaire was used to remedy the situation that would have affected the response rate. The researcher and his two assistants were present to answer to queries about the completion of the survey questionnaires. The quantitative survey methods were also advantageous in the study. One advantage was that it was useful in describing the characteristics of the large population. Standardized questionnaires have an important strength concerning measurement and the control of the phenomenon under investigation.

Qualitative research is anchored on the constructionist viewpoint, which assumes that multiple realities are or could be socially constructed through individual and collective perceptions or views of the same situations . In qualitative research, the phenomenon should be self – evident, and needs to manifest itself as it is. The researcher in this field is more involved in and with the phenomenon (Collins *et al.*, 2000: 91). The main

concern here, for a qualitative researcher, is to understand social actions in terms of specific context, (idiographic motive) rather than attempting to generalize to some theoretical population (Babbie and Mouton, 2001:270). To be able to gain access to research objects, the qualitative researcher may use a theoretical selection of cases, such as purposive sampling, and qualitative methods of data collection, such as participant observations, in- depth interviews, focus groups, and other qualitative data collection methods. The quality of data is enhanced if good relationships is maintained with all the members of the community throughout the project

Social science researchers however, soon came to realize that although qualitative research and quantitative research differ, they could also, in specific areas, complement each other and allow for a more complete analysis of a situation. No single method or combined methods would be able to exhaust any study on human behaviour and social interactions but triangulating some approaches would at least go a long way in ameliorating some of the problems. According to Collins *et al.*, 2000:91) because of the complicity in a confused reality, multiple methods afford a partial solution. In this study, the researcher used the survey method to establish the attitudes of participants towards the topic under study and followed it up with the in – depth interviews, observations and focus group interviews to further understand their individual viewpoints.

The use of multiple methods afforded the researcher the flexibility needed in choosing the best strategies to address the research questions. The two approaches were triangulated in the data collection methods, in that, the quantitative survey questionnaire was used, while qualitative data collection techniques of observation, focus groups and in – depth interview were also used. Validity was ensured through the triangulation of these two methods, in recognition of the fact that all the methods have their limitations and that the biases inherent in any single method could neutralize or cancel the biases of other methods.

The quantitative and qualitative approaches allowed a convergence of philosophy, viewpoints, traditions, methods, and conclusions that created the required insights that would not have been possible with a single approach. This is most suitable when a researcher wants to collect both types of data at the same time about a single

phenomenon in order to compare and contrast the different findings to produce well – validated conclusions (Creswell, Ivankova and Clark 2007:268). The researcher and his assistants piloted all the data collection instruments used in the study, and in the process, piloted the settings for the focus group interviews and the observation method. With this procedure, the researcher was able to detect possible grey areas before the interview proper. According De Vos *et al.*, (2005:278), in order to avoid subjectivity, the researcher should investigate various fields as part of the pilot study before a particular field is selected.

In the qualitative method, the possibility that an observers might become absorbed in group activities to the extent of abandoning their role as observers in the process, represents a real danger that is likely to affect their sense of judgment. The researcher guarded against this by combining the three qualitative methods of data collection: observation, in – depth interview and focus groups in the community in other to build coherent justification for themes. By triangulating the three sources of data, the themes were properly identified. The researcher and his assistants constantly compared notes after every interview to ensure coherence with the goals and objectives of the study.

The researcher used member checking or stakeholder checks to determine the accuracy of the report. After the fieldwork, the researcher went back to the field to check whether the participants had more opinions on the topics raised in the course of the interview, and to correct any unforeseen mistakes. The researcher replayed the recorded version of the interview both in audio and in the video format that enabled the participants to crosscheck their statements before they were used. The stakeholder checks accorded the participants and others, who had interest in the research, the opportunity to review the research findings, interpretations, and conclusions. For example, participants in Amsterdam were given the chance to remark on the researcher's interpretations of the community's individual experiences expressed during the interviews. Again, the length of time the researcher spent in the field, allowed for an in – depth understanding of members of the Amsterdam community. It was therefore easier to communicate the narrative accounts of the people in detail.

Some of the limitations reported in the literature were that focus group samples were typically small and may not be representative. Again, all the participants were expected to congregate in the same place at the same time (Nieuwenhuis, 2007:91). The focus group discussion was conducted in two batches, one for the youths, and one for the adults in the community. The researcher used an environment the participants were very conversant with. The youths were eighteen (18) in number and the venue was the youth center in the community. The adults were twenty – eight (28) in number and the discussion was held in a church compound after a service. The youths were comfortable with both the environment and the topics of the study. The topics touched on those issues that concerned them the most: further education, bursaries, employment problems, which they blamed on the lack of information in the community. With the kind of topics discussed, nobody wanted to be left out. They treated the topics with passion and the discussion was well moderated as the researcher introduced a system, which made it possible for every participant to contribute through signaling his or her willingness to contribute by raising a hand. Participants expressed their views freely, and no single opinion was allowed to dominate the discussion. There were some hot arguments but they were resolved amicably. The focus group interview proceedings were recorded; reflection notes and non-verbal cues in the discussion were also noted. The researcher and his assistants had time after the interview to listen to the recorded interviews and compare notes afterwards to check and to correct any discrepancies as a further enhancement of validity.

The researcher also used peer-debriefing method to improve the accuracy of the entire project. He was introduced to two top civil servants who had worked in the community before. Their sound knowledge of information behaviour and socio – economic background of the community members enriched the study. They took time independently to assess the accuracy of the accounts. The process was aimed at seeing how the accounts resonated with people other than the researcher. The way others or outsiders interpreted the study would validate it. The researcher was constantly referring the study to his supervisor who was exceptionally helpful in pointing

out the areas that needed improvement and suggested ways of going about it, which went along way in enhancing validity.

Universities normally employ the services of external auditors to authenticate research projects. The external auditors provide an objective assessment of the project by investigating the accuracy of the transcript, establishing a link between the research questions and the data and the overall interpretation of the data.

Extensive field notes were kept in the course of the study as an important aspect of enhancing the validity and reliability of the study. The field notes enabled the researcher to keep records of the step – by – step processes of the research. Every decision that had to do with the data collection and interpretation, was documented to enable others to verify the study when necessary. Extensive notes were kept to minimize the usual mistakes that can happen without such notes. It was relatively easy to go back to notes to recall any process or procedure that had been forgotten during the interviews and the interpretations. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:275) “we would encourage you to keep at least two sets of notes; one describing the environment in which your study takes place, including extensive observation notes, and other containing theoretical memoranda, such as observations which contradict or enhance your original theoretical ideas”.

It was considered necessary to use several methods of data collection because issues that were unlikely to emerge in one – on – one interviews were more likely to emerge in focus group interviews, in – depth interviews or through observations. According to Greeff (2009:286), group dynamics can be a catalytic factor in bringing information to the fore. The criticisms associated with both the quantitative and qualitative approaches were minimized and in most cases cancelled in the study with triangulation, which facilitated interpretative validity and established data trustworthiness. Triangulation was adopted to minimize the risk of chance associations and systematic bias usually associated with the use of a single approach. The study depended solely on the information collected from a variety of data collection methods that were very rigorous and effectively executed to engender objectivity and validity in the study.

No single research study could eliminate all threats to validity. However, the researcher was able to combine data collection methods of the quantitative and qualitative approaches to arrive at credible and valid responses.

3.7 Data analysis

Responses from the questionnaire were recorded and summarized after each data collection session to enhance the focus and to keep abreast of the insights. The items in the questionnaire were edited, coded, and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). In order to establish relationships between variables, socio – economic and demographic characteristics such as age, educational level, sex, and occupation were analysed quantitatively and descriptive statistics were used, with charts and tables for clarity. The qualitative data were used manually to generate categories, themes, and patterns from the social setting that emerged from the three instruments of data collection, namely, the in – depth interviews, the observations, and the focus group discussions. Thick descriptions and direct quotes from respondents were also applied in the analysis to contextualize the experiences and circumstances of the members of the Amsterdam community.

3.8 Ethical considerations statement

Creswell (2009:87) states that research does involve collecting data from people, about people. It therefore follows that researchers need to:

- Protect their research participants;
- Develop a trust with them;

- promote the integrity of the research
- guard against misconduct and impropriety that might reflect on their organizations or institutions
- cope with new and challenging problems

According to Creswell et al (2007:300) “anyone involved in research needs to be aware of the general agreements about what is proper and improper in scientific research”.

The main problems that confronted the study were the length of time it took to get clearance from the University of Fort Hare. The clearance from the University delayed the data collection process and the researcher was only able to proceed to the field in December of 2012. The researcher’s supervisor eventually rectified the clearance issues and he proceeded to the field. The letter of confirmation from the Municipal Manager is presented in Appendix D.

The next problem that occurred in the clearance process from the University was the timing of the fieldwork. It nearly conflicted with the Christmas arrangements of the participants. Some of the participants were busy with their Christmas shopping during the period of the fieldwork but the two assistants were still able to negotiate for a better time. Those who could not grant interviews in the mornings asked for the team to come back at their own time, which they did. Some who could not grant interviews in the mornings were willing to do so in the evenings.

Secondly, even when the municipality granted the researcher permission for the study in the community, it was difficult to gain access to the farming communities that were far removed from Amsterdam town and Kwa Thandeka. The manager of the municipality had to assign an Assistant –Director from the municipal offices as a tour –guide for the duration of the fieldwork. The Assistant – Director was a well – known personality in the community and his presence helped to calm the community members and remove their earlier suspicions. It was the responsibility of the Assistant – Director to first introduce the researcher and his assistants and the purpose of the study to the members of the community before every interview session. It was time – consuming but it also enhanced the credibility of the research.

The data collection instruments were translated into SiSwati (which was a combination of the Swati and Zulu languages used simultaneously in most communities in

Mpumalanga Province) to enable the respondents understand and to answer the questions more correctly, but they still encountered some problems. The respondents found most of the library and the research terms very difficult to comprehend, for example such terms as “availability of library materials”, “information access”, “library accessibility”, “information sources”, “library services” e.t.c. The researcher, in conjunction with the interpreter and the two assistants made sure that all the terms used in the instruments were comprehensively explained for a better understanding.

All the arrangements made earlier to gather the appropriate number of respondents at the venue for the focus group interview did not prove very useful in the end. Many of the respondents, who had earlier declared their willingness to participate, changed their minds because of other pressing issues. There was impromptu interviewing of some community members to help ascertain whether they were ready for inclusion in the main focus group interview the next day.

The disappointment the researcher and his team would have confronted on the day of the interview was avoided because the preparations started days before the real interview date. The focus group interviews targeted the youths and the adults in the community.

Despite all the earlier arrangements, some respondents still came to the venue very late. The researcher had to wait until everybody arrived before the commencement of the interview. Another problem was with the answering of the questions. One assistant researcher took her time to interpret the questions very well in SiSwati - Zulu for the respondents.

It should be reiterated that the researcher respected all the rules of research engagements in the community to the letter. The researcher and his assistants did not start any interview in Amsterdam without reading out the rights of the respondents, for example, the right to participate or not to do so. Respondents were not under any obligation to participate. The researcher and his assistants made sure that respondents comprehended the reasons for the research, which enabled them to have a clearer understanding of what was expected of them. Confidentiality of the respondents was discussed before every interview to enable them understand their levels of involvement.

The respondents were also made to understand that the research was harmless; i.e. that there was no discussion in the study that could harm them emotionally or otherwise. In addition, that they were free to pull out at any time during the interviews. The researcher used debriefing of the participants to reassure them of their safety and as an added opportunity for them to change any statements they made earlier in the interview, if they so wished. Emphasis must be placed on accurate and complete information, so that subjects fully comprehend the investigation and consequently are able to make a voluntary, thoroughly reasoned decision about their possible participation (De Vos *et al.*, 2005:57 – 60). A consent form was developed by the University of Fort Hare for the participants to sign before accepting or granting interviews to the researcher. The research assistants and an interpreter also translated the consent form. According to Stake (cited in Creswell *et al.*, 2007:299), the researcher needs constant participation from his or conscience, from stakeholders and from the research community in order to prevent ethical issues from arising.

3.9 Importance / Significance of the problem

The findings of this study is expected to contribute towards identifying the information needs of the economically disadvantaged community of Amsterdam in the Mpumalanga Province of South Africa and thereby provide rich literature on the reading and information needs and information seeking behaviour of the economically disadvantaged in the rural community of Amsterdam and South Africa by extension. Such information is vital for reference and may be used by all stakeholders within and outside the community.

3.10 Chapter summary

The methodology used in this chapter was based on the aim and objectives of the study of the information – seeking behaviour of members of the Amsterdam community. The two research approaches of qualitative and quantitative methods were defined and elaborated on. The study therefore, adopted the triangulation approach, based on the

assumption that any bias inherent in a particular data source, investigator, and method would be neutralized when used in conjunction with other data sources. The method used in sampling 238 participants out of an estimated population of 14059 in Amsterdam was described. The survey method was used, for the questionnaire contained open – ended and closed – ended questions for the study of the demographics, sex, age, and the socio – economic status of the community. While from the qualitative method, purposive sampling was used to select the elements that contained the most characteristics and typical attributes of the Amsterdam population through observations, focus group discussions and in – depth interviews. Two focus group discussions were held, one for the youths who were 18 in number, while another was conducted for 28 adults in the community. Observation was done in the library among library users to observe and to record some of the activities of the users in the library setting. The information – seeking behaviour of users was observed and the frequency of library visits was recorded.

CHAPTER FOUR

4 Data presentation analysis and interpretation

4.1 Introduction

Data analysis can be defined as a process in which raw data has been ordered and organized so that useful information could be extracted from it. The process of organizing and thinking about data should be the key to understanding what the data can and cannot contain. Data analysis enhances the process of categorizing, ordering, manipulating and summarizing of data to obtain answers to research questions. The purpose of analysis enables the reduction of data to an intelligible and interpretative form so that the relations of research problems could be studied, tested and conclusions drawn (De Vos *et al.*, 2005:218). It can also be seen as a method of evaluating data with the aid of analytical and logical reasoning to examine each component of the data provided. Data were gathered from various sources, reviewed, and then analyzed to form some sort of finding or conclusion. The important aspect that needs to be considered in data analysis is the decision on how the data should be presented, for example in tables, graphs or quotations (Creswell *et al.*, 2007).

Both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered based on Wilson's general model of information behaviour. Wilson's model of information – seeking behaviour (1996:257) is presented in Figure 2 above.

“Wilson’s model assumes two propositions. First, that information needs are secondary needs, caused by primary needs, which in accordance with definitions in psychology can be defined as physiological, cognitive, or affective. Cognitive needs rise as an attempt to find sense out of order in the world, and are the realization of a need to explain and make sense out of phenomena, but also can be stimulated by common, non – utilitarian curiosity. The rise of a particular need is

influenced by the context, which can be the person him or herself, or the role the person plays in work and life, or the environment (social, political, economical, technological, etc.). The elements of the context intertwine; sometimes they condition each other (Niedzwiedzka, 2003)."

Wilson's model of information – seeking behaviour identifies the various major determinants of information behaviour based on research in various fields (psychology, sociology, decision – making etc.). For example, the factors that influence information needs, could be the person, role – related or of an environmental nature. The variables of the psychological attributes that people display towards life around them, are their outlook on life and system of values, political orientation, knowledge, style of learning, emotional variables, attitudes towards innovation, stereotypes, preferences, prejudices, self – perception (self – evaluation of knowledge and skills), interests, and knowledge of the subjects, tasks information or search system. According to Halder, Roy and Chakraborty (2010:43), one important psychological mechanism which guides behaviour is personality and, as personality forms an inclination towards certain characteristics reactions in any given situation, personality traits are likely to influence attitudes and behaviour in information seekers.

Role – related or interpersonal variables are identified by library scholars as a collection of tightly inter linked human activities with explicitly or implicitly understood purposes, meanings and values. Work could also be regarded as a process, behaviour or a transient procedure, not a static structure. Personal needs are the main driver of motivation that could translate to information – seeking behaviour. Wilson (2000:10) indicates that these needs occur out of the roles an individual plays in social life. The work – role can be classified as a set of activities, responsibilities, e.t.c. of an individual, within the community setting, in the quest for earnings, contributing to the community at large, performing any other role that he or she is socially positioned for.

The environmental variables within which the life and work of an information user occur, are also identified as a crucial factor that affects the information – seeking of disadvantaged communities in Amsterdam. The environment encompasses the social environment, its organizational structure, including the service and systems, economic situations, technology, culture, tradition, e.t.c.(Niedzwiedzka, 2003:4). The environment

of an individual and his or her role within it should be considered as the actual context of information needs. The three notable variables, personality, role – related, environmental factors and the dependent variables or, as Wilson called it, intervening variables as identified in the general model of information – seeking behaviour of (Wilson,1996:257) have been discussed extensively in the literature in Chapter 2 of this study and it was successfully used to investigate the information – seeking behaviour of the economically disadvantaged community of Amsterdam in the Mpumalanga Province of South Africa.

The survey method, a focus group discussion, an in – depth interview and observation were used to answer the four research questions about the variables identified below:

- What information sources and channels are available to meet the needs of members of Amsterdam community?
- Which factors influence the rural communities' use of information?
- What is the state of library and information service provision to the economically disadvantaged in the rural community of Amsterdam?
- Does the library have any part to play in the improvement of information services the economically disadvantaged rural communities?

The researcher purposively selected 80 respondents for the in – depth interviews. Purposive or judgmental sampling is considered appropriate for a researcher to select samples based on his /her knowledge of the population, its elements, and the nature of the research aims. It is therefore based on the judgment and the purpose of the study.

Focus group interview selected 46 respondents for the group discussions in a bid to thoroughly understand the community's information – seeking behaviour. In the focus group interview, the researcher used a sample size that exceeded the normal sizes of between 6 – 12 because of the relative effectiveness and the need to get the opinions based on gender and to balance it with the age groups in the community. The youths, the workers, and those in private business, male and female were all captured in the focus group to ensure adequate representation. The interview sessions were held as follows: the researcher and his assistants started in the business premises of some

community members. These included those at the business premises as shoppers and owners of businesses. Community members were also interviewed at the police station, the post office and at the clinic, where both health workers and patients who were able to talk were interviewed. The focus group discussions were conducted by soliciting the assistance of some who had been interviewed earlier.. Some of these were youth organizers in the community and the clergy, so they helped the researcher to organize the youth for the group discussions, while the clergy and the community heads organized the adults in the community for the group discussions. The interview sessions and the focus group discussions were recorded with the permission of the respondents. The observation, which was conducted in the library, targeted those who were in the library at the particular times of the observation. The procedure was semi – structured to allow for some questions to be included and at the same time to observe their library usage and the information they were interested in. All three kinds of qualitative data gathering methods were later used to structure the survey questionnaire. The qualitative data schedule is summarized in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4-1 : Qualitative data schedule

In – depth interview sessions	conducted	Focus group discussions		Observation library
		conducted		conducted
		adults	Youths	Library users
Business premises	20	28	18	32
Amsterdam municipal council	16			
Police station	15			
Post office	15			
clinic	14			
Total	80	46		32

Table 4.1 above illustrates the composition of the qualitative data schedule used in the study. The analysis in this chapter is based on the actual interviews conducted in the Amsterdam community. The in- depth interviews were conducted purposively, by hand picking those from the community whose contributions would benefit the research investigation. The researcher and his assistants had interviews with people who were expected to understand the community dynamics well and they recommended community members knowledgeable enough to be of help to the study. The first 20 people encountered at the business premises in Amsterdam were interviewed. The same approach was used to interview 16 people at the municipal council offices, 15 at the police station, another 15 people at the post office and, finally,14 people at the clinic. The in – depth interviews were used specifically to articulate the information needs of the respondents and the results were later compared with related studies in the literature.

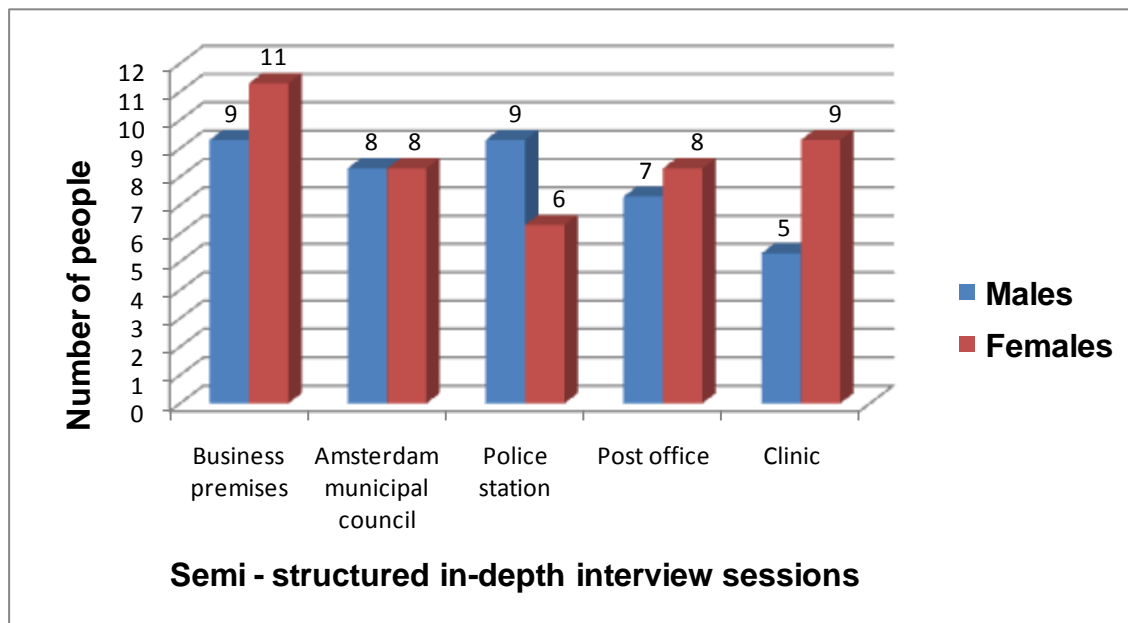


Figure 4-1: Gender composition of semi – structured in – depth interview

Figure 4.1 above illustrates the semi-structured, in-depth interview schedule used for the investigation of the information-seeking behaviour of the community and provides more insights and details. It afforded the researcher the opportunity to obtain viewpoints on issues of information – seeking, information availability and access, need and use in the community. It provided the much needed flexibility for a fuller understanding of the community's information behaviour. The researcher and the respondents interacted better in a way that enabled information to flow easily and without inhibitions.

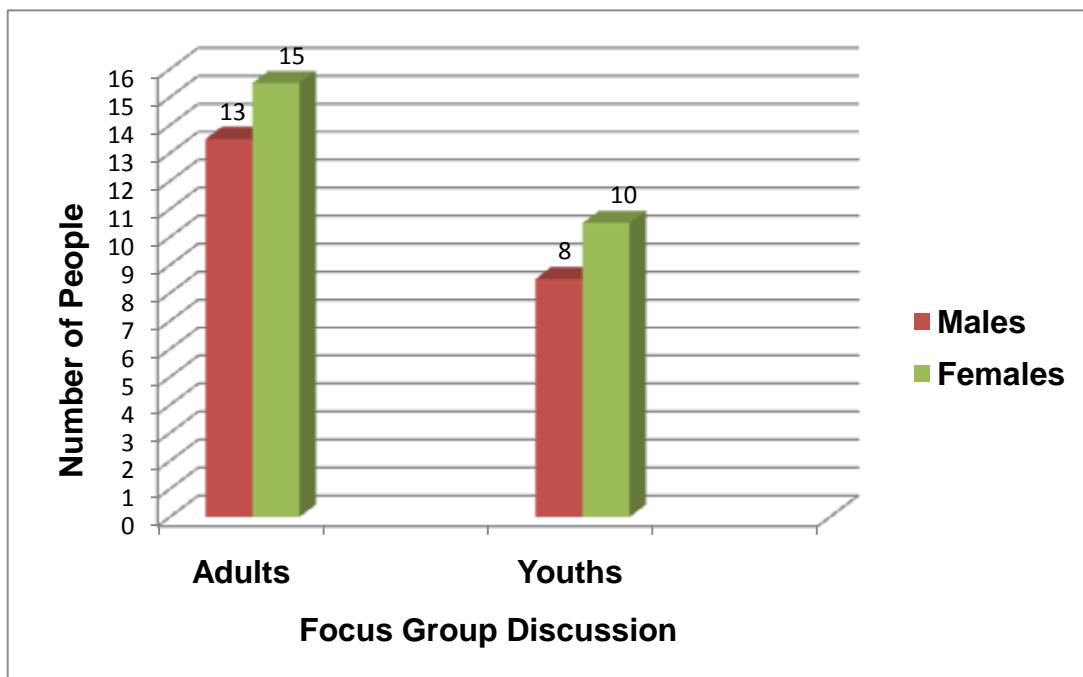


Figure 4-2: Gender composition of focus group discussion

Figure 4.2 above shows the focus group discussions that were conducted separately for the adults and the youth in the community. These two groups were separated to provide them the opportunity to handle issues that directly concerned them. The focus group discussions enabled the researcher to fully understand the feelings and opinions of the youth and the specific issues they had to contend with in their daily lives in the community. The 18 youth, 8 males and 10 females were chosen based on their shared circumstances which

included joblessness, the need for further education, illiteracy, general poverty in the community and the need for information. The adults were 28 in number, 15 females, and 13 male. In the focus group discussion with the youth, they indicated they lacked information to enable them pursue higher education. The fact that there was no information available to them for self - development, and to redress unemployment as well as the geographical isolation of Amsterdam from sources of information should, therefore, be regarded as a serious setback for the community. In the focus group with the adults, at a different time and place, they also indicated that their children were roaming around in the community without any hope of furthering their education. The adults were unanimous in stating that the children in the community were restless because of a dearth of jobs and opportunities for further education as well as the abject poverty they had to confront daily. The responses of participants in the two focus groups and the semi – structured interviews earlier conducted with community members were similar in all respects. The focus group meetings were limited to two because the responses were not diverse in any form. Participants were selected because they had certain characteristics in common that related to the topic of the focus group. Had there been more diversity in the responses, more groups would have been created in order to get a diversity of opinions (De Vos *et al.*,2005:299) The researchers suggested that one should plan to use more groups whenever there was a diverse range of responses to a topic. The main reason for the use of few groups was the lack of diversity in the responses from the community (De Vos *et al.*, 2005:306).

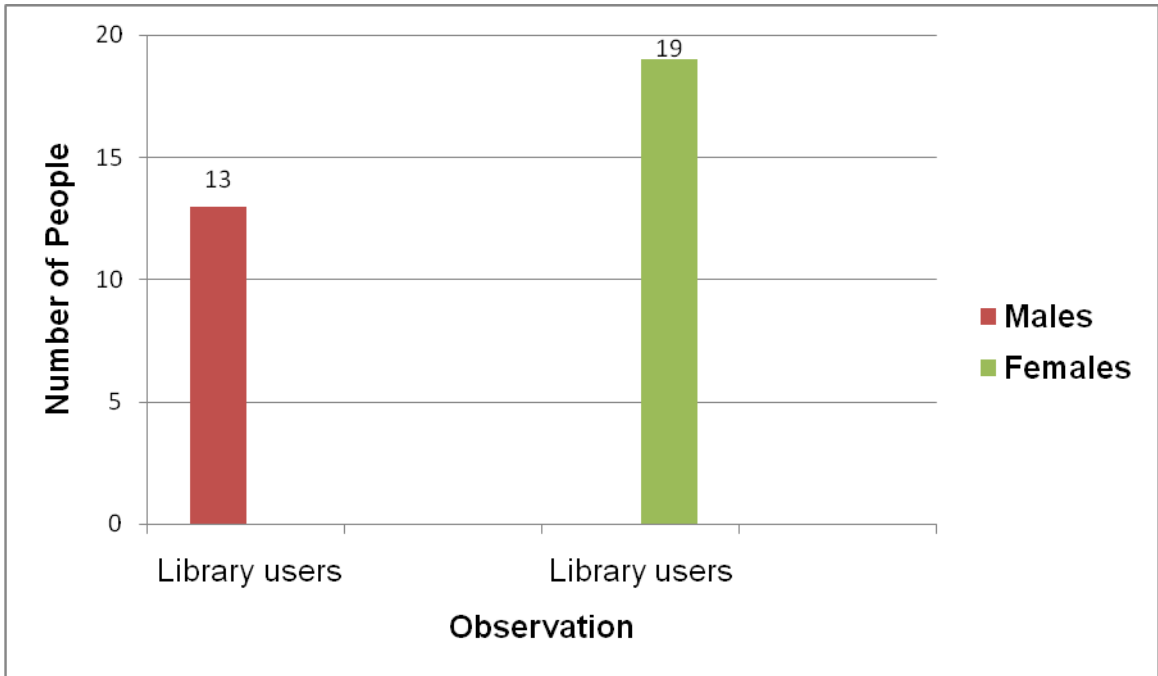


Figure 4-3: Observations as conducted in Amsterdam Library

Figure 4.3 above shows the composition of the library observation that was conducted in the Amsterdam Library. The researcher worked in the community library in Amsterdam for four years. In the course of the observation, the researcher was still regarded as a librarian, which in many ways made the researcher's re - entry to the library normal. This represented a participant observer approach. The researcher participated in all the duties he used to perform when he worked in the library. The researcher also adopted some elements of self - observation to obtain information on the users information - seeking. The researcher was able to observe the resources most of the users in the library needed and used more frequently for information. These included fiction and non-fiction books, pamphlets, university brochures, newspapers for job advertisements and the information - seeking that occurred outside the library environment (Cooper, Lewis and Urquhart,20043 - 4).

Concerning the quantitative approach, the researcher conducted a survey to determine the critical factors that affected the community's access to information. The sample size was calculated from the population size of Amsterdam community, which was 14059.

This was done using the MaCorr Sample Size Calculator, with a confidence level of 95%, and a confidence interval of $\pm 6.3\%$ as shown in the Table 4.2 below.

Table 4-2: Sample characteristics

Amsterdam community	Population size	Sample size (\pm 6.3% confidence interval)	Number of questionnaires distributed	Number of questionnaires selected for analysis
	14059	238	251	225
Confidence level 95%				

From a sample of 238 as calculated from the population in Table 4.2 above, the researcher distributed a total of 251 questionnaires to the respondents within the Amsterdam community, of which 225 were returned. The analysis was therefore based on the 225 questionnaires returned by the respondents.

4.2 Demographic profiles of respondents

The central focus of the demographics of the Amsterdam community was illustrated in terms of sex, age, social and economic factors, and the educational levels of the respondents. The demographic profiles of Amsterdam enabled the researcher to gain a better understanding of the information - seeking behavior of the person, the role of the individual within the context of his or her environment, and how the aforementioned variables supported or prevented information – seeking, need and use in the Amsterdam community. The demographic characteristics were compared with the population parameters derived from the Census Data collected by Statistics South Africa (2011) to ensure that the views of different sections of the community were adequately represented in the research. Regarding gender, there were 6600 (47%) male and 7459 (53%) female respondents.

The gender profile of respondents as shown below in Table 4.4 confirmed that approximately 51% (approximately 27, 16 million) of the population of the Republic of South Africa is female (Statistics South Africa Mid – year population estimate, 2013:3). The roles of women and men in Amsterdam were, therefore, considered in the structure of their demographics. Again, in most cases the traditional African woman was expected to look after the home while the man was supposed to be in the urban areas looking for a job or even working. The rural women, specifically, engaged in domestic chores, raising children and looking after the farms and the livestock (Saleh and Lasisi, 2011:1). In their study of information needs and information seeking behaviour of rural women in Borno State of Nigeria, Saleh and Lasisi, further stated : “ Despite the problems women go through on a daily basis, for example, illiteracy, poverty, hunger, diseases and the general absence of infrastructure in the rural areas, rural women are still very resourceful and contribute to the sustainability of the family and society”. In the survey study conducted in the more rural villages and farming communities in Amsterdam, the researcher and his assistants found that the women were more visible in the home attending to one household chores or the other or on their farms. Infact, most of the women granted us interviews on their farms.

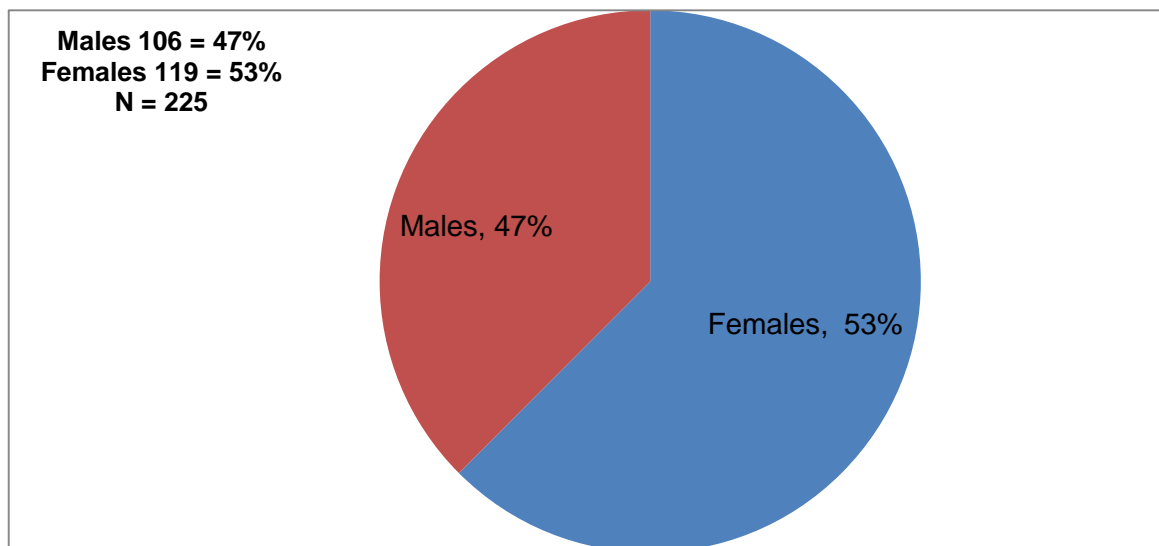


Figure 4-4: Gender profile of respondents

In Figure 4.4 above, the age - group profile was also helpful in that it revealed the information needs that determined the information – seeking behaviour of respondents. According to Gericke *et al* (1996:261) in developing communities you have larger proportion of young people , due to a high birth rate and a high mortality rate (of both children and adults). Gericke and her colleagues pointed out that the age structure of specific communities will therefore influence the type of library and information services they require. The age – groups targeted in the profile of respondents in Amsterdam were carefully considered, in order to ascertain their actual need for information in the community; thus, avoiding any bias that could have emanated when dealing with school – related problems. The researcher used age – groups from 18 and above. 24% of respondents were between the ages of 18 – 26. It could be that, owing to the dearth of opportunities in the community, some of the residents in those age groups have left the community in search of better lives in the urban areas, such as Ermelo, Piet Retief and other urban towns. 30% of respondents were between 27 – 34,while 21% were between the ages of 35 - 42 years.. Furthermore, 17% were between the ages of 43 – 50. The remaining 8% were over 51 years old.

Library scholars have found that, as a result of low literacy levels, the rural poor communities are not always able to articulate their information needs, and most times, they are not even aware that they have any need for information. The suggested solution has been to adopt community based methods of inquiry that would enable a better understanding of the information – seeking behaviour of rural communities in the provision of community information (Jiyane,2002:29; Meyer,2005:5;lkoja – Odongo and Ocholla,2004:59;Uga,2007:1). The researcher therefore categorized the respondents into five age-groups with a start off age of 18 and above, to minimize the problems normally associated with a rural community's inability to interpret and clearly state their information – seeking situations as shown in Figure 4.5 below

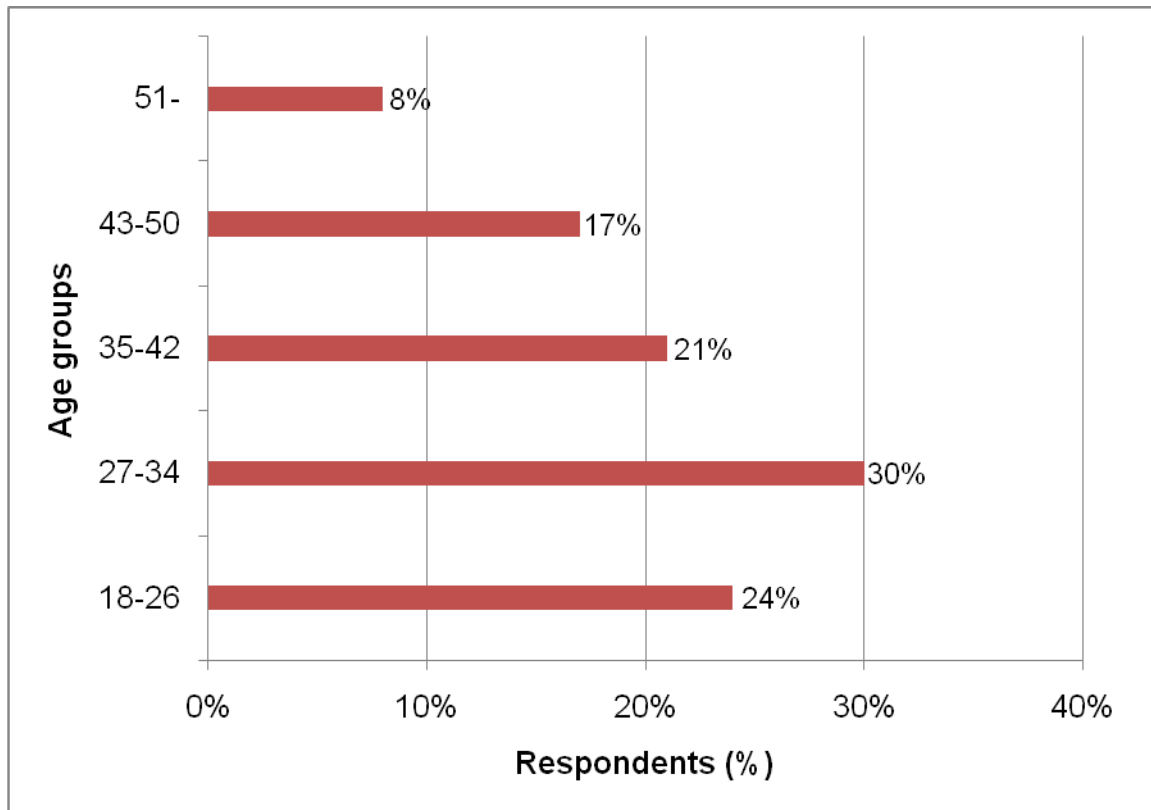


Figure 4-5: Age - group profile of respondents

In Figure 4.6 below, 101(45%) of respondents finished secondary education (Matric). 36 (16%) respondents had a certificate or diploma, 11 (5%) had a Bachelor's degree and 9 (4%) had an Honours degree. The respondents who had never been to school numbered 68 (30%).

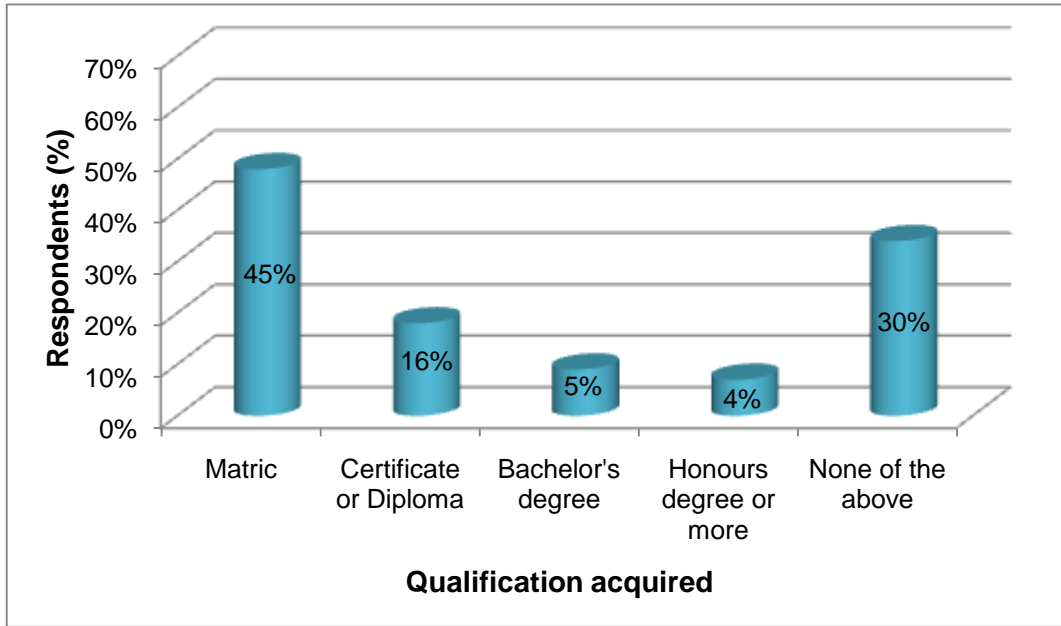


Figure 4-6: Levels of education of the respondents

The analysis further revealed that the respondents' level of education declined as the study moved further into the farming communities and the more rural villages in Amsterdam. Those with secondary school qualifications (Matric), certificates or diplomas, Bachelor's degrees and Honours degrees or more, were more in Amsterdam town than in the deep rural parts of the community where most infrastructure such as good roads and basic amenities such as water and electricity were conspicuously absent.

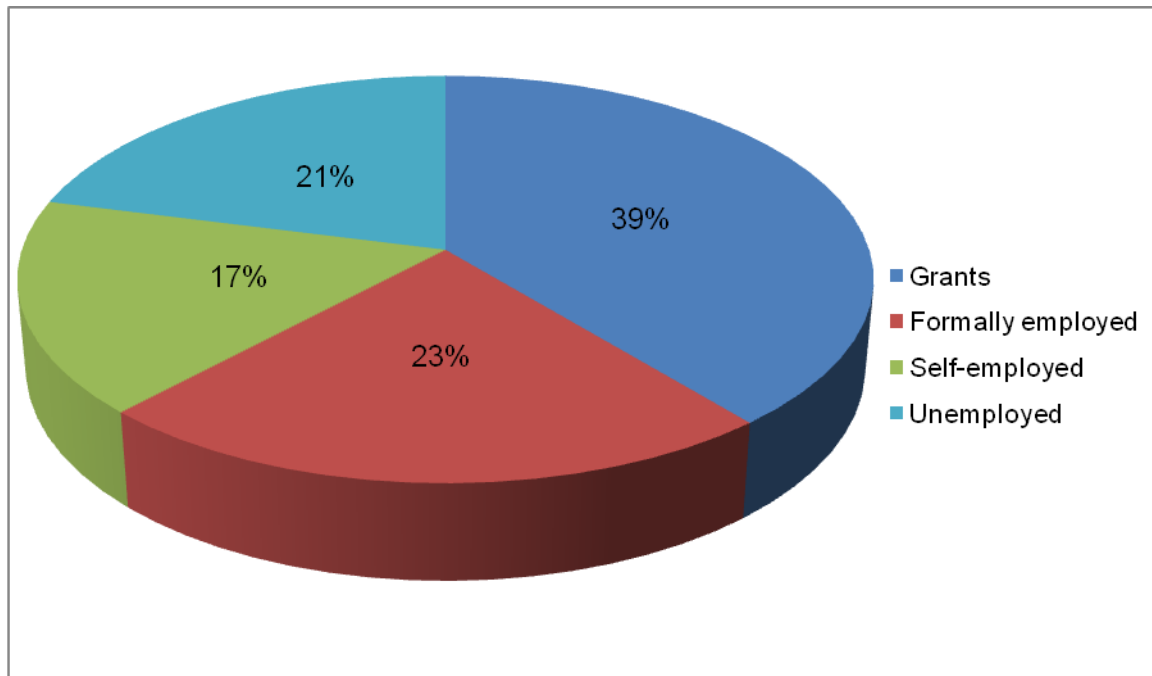


Figure 4-7: Sources of income of respondents

Table 4.7 above shows the sources of income of respondents. 88 (39%) respondents depended on government grants, 52 (23%) were formally employed, with the police, the post office, the municipal council, the Magistrate’s court, the only bank in the community, Telkom, in forestry, and as nurses and government doctors in the clinic. The formally employed respondents were interviewed in their places of work. The self – employed accounted for 38 (17%) respondents, who included taxi drivers and owners, those in the butchery business, Tavern owners and their employees, small scale businesses that ranged from fruit and vegetable sellers, food vendors, hair salon owners, farmers and livestock farmers. There were 47 (21%) unemployed respondents. Figure 4.7 above shows, that 88 (39%) were on grants while the respondents who were unemployed totaled 47 (21%). This means, therefore, that 135 (60%) respondents were poor.

4.3 Information – seeking behavior, needs and use of the rural community of Amsterdam

The analysis was based on a survey of the information – seeking behaviour of the respondents in the community, the sources and channels of information used, and the need that motivated the respondents to seek information and use it. The research questions were therefore structured and analyzed in the following order:

- The sources and channels used by the rural Amsterdam community in meeting their information needs
- The factors that influenced the rural communities' use of information
- The state of library and information service provision to the economically disadvantaged in the rural community of Amsterdam
- The role of the library in the improvement of information services to the economically disadvantaged rural communities

In the study of information needs of economically disadvantaged communities, library and information science scholars have identified several information needs based on empirical investigation of various disadvantaged communities. Library scholars have identified through case study, observation and in – depth interviews, some of the most common information needs in rural African communities. The most commonly identified information needs are:

- Agricultural information
- Educational information
- Economic information
- Health information
- Environmental information
- Religious information
- Problems of daily existence - survival information (Dent, 2006:19; Saleh and Lasisi, 2011:3- 4; Olarongbe and Ademolake, 2013:2 – 3). These were not

different from what the researcher found in the Amsterdam community. Just as Dent (2006:19) pointed out in her study, that specific issues still exist. For example, health issues are very common in rural African societies where poverty is still the order of the day, but the diseases may differ. Even in agriculture, most crops grown in Namibia, for example, may be relatively unknown to other rural communities in Africa. So, one could say that the environment of the respondents matters more in this circumstance.

According to Gould, Gomez and Camacho (2010:4), user needs vary according to social, religious, gender, cultural, economic, educational, and geographic variables. They also indicated that one could not generalize that all people within a particular environment require the same things, or that community and individual needs are the same, although recurring themes should not be ruled out.

Respondents were asked several questions aimed at understanding the context of information – seeking, needs, and usage within the community. According to Unagha and Ibenne (2011:3) places can generally be considered rural when they lack basic social amenities such as good roads, health care, power supply, pipe – borne drinkable water, schools and markets, and whether or not they are in rural or urban areas.

The information needs of rural people would therefore relate to health, housing, income, legal protection, economic opportunities, political rights, and citizens action information, which may be needed for effective participation as individuals or as members of a group in the social, political, legal, and economic process (Jiyane, 2002:28). It is important to see from the discussion above that information needs arise from situations within the developing communities' quest for survival and existence, which has a direct bearing on basic human needs. Poor communities have a dire shortage of information for decision making in their daily lives. Because of inadequate educational background, a limited field of experience and underdeveloped cognitive abilities, they are often not able to express their own needs. Most rural people find the concept of information needs abstract and therefore difficult to articulate (Gericke *et al*, 1996:108). The survey on the information needs of respondents in the Amsterdam community, as shown in

Table 4.3 below, illustrates the information needs of members of the Amsterdam community.

4.3.1 Information needs and information – seeking situations

The researcher used the literature available in the study, the in – depth interview conducted on 80 respondents, the focus group discussions and observation to structure the survey questionnaires that helped in clarifying the information needed by the respondents in Amsterdam. Opportunities were created, with the use of the three qualitative methods for the respondents to describe the critical moments that prompted their need for information for problem solving in the community. The information needs described by respondents were reduced to eleven major information ones, as shown in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4-3: The actual information needs of Amsterdam community

What information was required for	Male	Female	Respondents Total N = 225	% Male	% Female	100 %
Work – related reasons	9	11	20	4.0	4.9	8.9
Daily survival information	21	24	45	9.3	10.7	20.0
Health	17	20	37	7.6	8.9	16.5
Legal matters/ citizen's right	3	2	5	1.3	0.9	2.2
Financial matters/ social security	11	5	16	4.9	2.2	7.1
Business/ commercial matters / Agriculture	9	12	21	4.0	5.3	9.3
Religious issues	2	3	5	0.9	1.3	2.2

Environmental information	10	8	18	4.4	3.6	8.0
Family/ personal matters	10	15	25	4.4	6.7	11.1
Education opportunities	14	17	31	6.2	7.6	13.8
Other (please specify)	0	2	2	0	0.9	0.9
Total	106	119	225	47	53	100 %

Table 4.3 above shows the actual information needs of respondents in Amsterdam. Information need in this study was considered a situation in which certain information contributed to the achievement of an actual or justifiable information purpose (Chandel and Saraf,2002:153). The common understanding was that every individual, whether literate or not, has information needs (Anyira, 2011:3). With that in mind, the researcher asked the respondents to mention and discuss their actual information needs. The majority 45 (20.0%) needed survival information, 21 (9.3%) male and 24(10.7%), female. 37 (16.7) respondents cited health information,17 (7.6%) of which were male and 20 (8.9%) female. The next need was for information on education, with 31 (13.8%) respondents consisting of 14 (6.2%) male and 17 (7.6%) female respondents Family and personal matters was a need identified by 25 (11.1%) respondents; 10 (4.4% males and 15 (6.7%) females. Business/ commercial matters and agriculture was the next need, chosen by 21(9.3%) respondents; 9 (4.0%) males and 12 (5.3%), females. 20 (8.9%) respondents chose work or role related needs, of which 9 (4.0%) were male and 11 (4.9%) were, female. The respondents who indicated the need for information on work – related issues were mothers, pastors, and fathers, community leaders who needed information for the community and youth leaders. Information on the environment was selected by 18 (8.0%) respondents; 10 (4.45%)males and 8 (3.6% females. Financial matters and social security reasons was mentioned by 16 (7.1%) respondents; 11(4.9%) males and, 5 (2.2%females Legal matters and citizen’s rights

was selected by 5 (2.2%) respondents; 3 (1.3%) males and 2 (0.9%) females. Religious reasons was mentioned by 5 (2.2%) people; 2 (0.9%) males and, 3 (1.3%) females. The category labeled others was chosen by 2 (0.9% respondents); 0 (0. %) males and, 2 (0.9%) females.

From the survey on information needs of respondents in Amsterdam, it could be seen that the information needs in the community were very diverse in nature. The analysis of the focus group discussion, the in- depth interview and the survey showed similarity of needs among groups of respondents. In the focus group interview for the youth in Amsterdam, ,which consisted of 8 males and 10 females, 18 respondents in total needed information on employment or for job opportunities and information for further education. Among the adults in the focus group, 13 males, and 15 females, 28 respondents in total indicated that employment or job opportunities were a critical issue for them. In the in- depth interview of 80 respondents in Amsterdam, 60 out of 80 , indicated the need for information on employment or job opportunities.

There was a debate on whether one could call the kind of information that was available in the community, sustainable information for the community members. The researcher defined sustainable information as information that could help a rural community meet the needs of the present, with the aim of conserving the natural resources for the future. Soil and forest conservation, fresh water management, and other environmental issues were discussed as part of sustainable information with the respondents. While most felt that there was no information at all, some respondents conceded that even when there was any such information in the area, it was always obsolete. Some responses from 18 youth respondents of the focus group interview in Amsterdam went thus:

“We have immediate need for information on employment and education. The community members have a majority of them who are unemployed. Again, we need mentors in the community especially for career guidance that will help those with secondary school education to secure tertiary education. The community has a lot of educated people but almost all of them have left the community without coming to plough back their knowledge for the benefit of the community”.

One of the young women in the focus group commented thus:

“It is very true that most times we find it extremely difficult to access Information in the community but most times also, you will find out that the youths of the community have this sense of entitlements that have contributed in making things very difficult for everybody. They find it difficult to ask questions over things they do not know or understand and that is very serious problem. How can you get the necessary information without asking relevant authorities questions?. As I said earlier, we have serious problems with regards to information but we should not compound it”

Another youth had this to say:

“I have lived in Amsterdam all my life and I do not understand when people say we have enough information here. Some of my mates who are now in the university were able to do so because of the big sisters and big brothers they have in the big cities. Those of us who do not have such people in the cities continue to suffer here without furthering our education. The community is a very dry place in terms of opportunities. We are really suffering here and somebody should come quickly to remedy the situation for the youths of the community. We want to get better education and jobs to help our families”

Table 4-4: Sources and channels of information for respondents

Sources and channels of information in Amsterdam	Male	Female	Respondents Total N = 225	% Male	% Female	100 %
Public libraries	5	7	12	2.2	3.1	5.3
Voluntary groups and agencies	6	4	10	2.7	1.8	4.5

Municipal office	10	12	22	4.4	5.3	9.7
Religious groups	2	2	4	0.9	0.9	1.8
Government Depts.	7	5	12	3.1	2.2	5.3
TV Stations	4	5	9	1.8	2.2	4.0
Radio Stations	24	16	40	10.7	7.1	17.8
Print media	9	6	15	4.0	2.7	6.7
Internet	3	2	5	1.3	0.9	2.2
Friends/relatives/ neighbours	20	31	51	8.9	13.8	22.7
Teachers	2	2	4	0.9	0.9	1.8
Nurses/Health workers	11	23	34	4.9	10.2	15.1
Personal/past experiences	3	4	7	1.3	1.8	3.1
Other advice centers	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	106	119	225	47.1	52.9	100 %

Table 4.4 above shows the sources and channels used by respondents in Amsterdam. Public libraries were used by 12 (5.3%) respondents 5 (2.2%) males and 7 (3.1%) females. Voluntary groups and agencies, for example, TAC – Treatment Action Campaign, Broad reach, Brothers 4 life and Read were used by 10 (4.5%) respondents 6 (2.7%) males and 4 (1.8%) females. Municipal offices had 20 (9.7%) users 10 (4.4%) males and 12 (5.3%) females. 4 (1.8%) respondents used religious sources, 2 (0.9%) of whom were male and also 2 (0.9%) were female. Government departments had 12 (5.3%) users, 7 (3.1%) were male and 2 (0.9%) were female. There were 9 (4.0%) for TV Stations with 4 (1.8%) males and 5 (2.2%) females. Radio Stations had 40 (17.8%) users, 24 (10.7%) were male and 16 (7.1%), were females. Print media were used by 15 (6.7%) 9 (4.0%) males and 6 (2.7%) females. 5 (2.2%) respondents used internet sources, 3 (1.2%) of whom were male and also 2 (0.9%) were female. Friends/

relatives/ neighbours were used by 51 (22.7%) respondents 20(8.9%) males and 31 (13.8%) females. The reliance on friends, relatives and neighbours corresponded with studies on information – seeking behaviour of rural African communities (Jiyane, 2002:31; Meyer, 2009:5). Nurses / health workers had 34 (15.1%) users 11 (4.9%) males and 23 (10.2%) females. There were 7 (3.1%) for Personal/ past experiences with 3 (1.3%) males and 4 (1.8%) females. Teachers in the community were used by 4 (1.8%) respondents 2 (0.9%) males and 2 (0.9%) females.

Table 4-5: Factors that influenced the choice of respondents' information sources

Factors	Frequency	100 %
Proximity to the information source	25	11.1
Affordability of the information source	70	31.1
Reliability of the information source	18	8.0
Format of the information source	7	3.1
Adequacy of information source	13	5.8
Convenience of use of the source	92	40.9
Total	225	100 %

Table 4.4 above shows that 51 (22.1%) respondents got information from friends, relatives and neighbours, followed by 40 (17.8%) who got information from the radio and 34 (15.1%) got information from nurses and health care workers. As indicated by the respondents, these were the most popular sources and the sources were preferred because of their convenience, affordability and proximity. The municipal offices were supposed to be the main source of information for the respondents, especially those in the farming communities and rural villages but they indicated that they could not afford the cost of transportation from their respective villages to the municipal offices in the rural town of Amsterdam. The factors that influenced the choice of the sources as shown in Tables 4.4 and 4.5 above described the sources used by the respondents to solve their information needs or the sources the respondents turned to for required information and the factors that influenced their choices.

4.3.2 Reasons for seeking information

From the literature in Section 2.3, studies have shown that information – seeking behaviour results from the recognition of needs as understood by the user. Again, library scholars have identified that the information – seeking behaviour of a group or individuals should focus on the user in the context of his or her role within the community, which may be social, cultural, political, and economic, and the information environment of the person in focus (Gu, Mendonca and Wu, 2003:53). Since the study was conducted in a rural area where the illiteracy rate among 19 – 24 was as high as 98%, unemployed was 44%, as recorded by (Statistics South Africa 2011 Census Data), the researcher took special note of the those factors and structured the questionnaire in a way that would not confuse the respondents. The factors that motivated information – seeking were structured to show how personality, work or role – related and environmental factors enhanced or impeded the information – seeking behaviour of the respondents in Amsterdam. The researcher also recognized that the factors identified - the personality, work or role – related and environmental factors related and interacted with each other. The interrelatedness and interdependence of the identified factors were also part of what the researcher was confronted with in the study (Wilson,2000:1)

Table 4-6: Factors that influenced information – seeking in Amsterdam

Information - seeking	Male	Female	Respondents Total N = 225	% Male	% Female	100 %
For personal development	14	15	29	6.2	6.7	12.9
For expectant mothers	3	6	9	1.3	2.7	4.0
Child - care	5	7	12	2.2	3.1	5.3
Health reasons	22	26	48	9.7	11.6	21.3

School related reasons	16	17	33	7.1	7.6	14.7
Work or role - related reasons	18	20	38	8.0	8.9	16.9
Information on agriculture	9	11	20	4.0	4.9	8.9
Family life	8	11	19	3.5	4.9	8.4
Environmental factors	9	6	15	4.0	2.7	6.7
Others (Please specify)	2	0	2	0.9	0	0.9
Total	106	119	225	46.9	53.1	100%

Table 4.6 above, the researcher investigated what motivated respondents in Amsterdam community to search for information. Personal development was the reason that 29 (12.9% respondents gave, of whom 14 (6.2%) were male and 15 (6.7%) were female. Personal development in the study included every other reason (s) that could uplift the status of an individual within his or her community – skills acquisition, education and even health – related reasons and the interactions of all the factors with each other .

9 (4.0%) respondents needed information for expectant mothers. There were 3 (1.3%) male respondents who had the need to source for information for their expectant wives or girlfriends and 6 (2.7) females. 12 (5.3%) respondents needed information on child 5 (2.2%) males and 7 (3.1%) females. Child – care issues ranged from child support from the government’s income grants to support from a male partner who had abandoned his responsibilities. Those who needed information on child – care were more in the farming and rural communities of Amsterdam.

Health was the reason that 48 (21.3%) respondents gave, of whom 22 (9.7%) were male and 26 (11.6%) were female. In this study, health – related reasons recorded the highest number of respondents of 48 (21.3%) who indicated that they were motivated mostly to seek for information on health – related grounds. The finding was not very

surprising, as Ahmed (2005:6), has already been quoted in Section 2.2 above on the relationship between poverty and public health. There is no doubt that “poverty affects health through poor nutrition, environmental degradation, illiteracy, harmful lifestyles, social exclusion, and lack of access to healthcare”.

33 (14.7%) respondents needed information for school – related issues 16 (7.1%) males and 17 (7.6%) females. The respondents especially the youths of school – going age whose only intentions were to further their education, could be said to be playing the roles of students.

Work or role – related was the reason that 38 (16.9%) respondents gave, of whom 18 (8.0%) were male and 20 (8.9%) were female. These roles included real work situations such as the teachers who needed information from the library, the police, the nurses and those who played different roles in the community; for example the mothers and the fathers, village heads, managers and doctors. Pharo (2004); Niedzwiedzka, (2003), asserts that the role characteristics of a person, including professional roles are the direct effect of the behaviour patterns shaped within that community for that particular role

Agricultural information accounted for 20 (9.8%) respondents, of whom 9 (4.0%) were male and 11(4.9%) were female. The respondents from the deep rural farming communities were mostly motivated to seek information on pest control, farm subsidies, loans, and improved varieties of inputs and modern farming implements. It was evident that the income of the respondents in the farming and rural communities was largely dependent on farming and therefore the need for information on agriculture. This agreed with the findings of Opara, (2010:4 – 5) that “income is crucial in agricultural information use because the higher the income of the farmer, the more likely he would seek and obtain information for use”.

19 (8.4%) respondents needed information for family life, 8 (3.5%) were male and 11 (4.9%) were female. Family planning issues were raised by the respondents who wanted to know how to maintain cordiality in the home, to

solve problems in their marriages, childcare and juvenile delinquency, and to assist their extended families (Zaid and Popoola,2010:10).

Environmental information was the reason that 15 (6.7%) respondents gave, of whom 9 (4.0%) were male and 6 (2.7%) were female. The environment issues ranged from the political dynamics of the community to the social and economic, and geographic isolation of the respondents which has hampered their development in one way or the other. The role of the environment in conditioning information – seeking behaviour of groups, rural or urban communities has been acknowledged by Library scholars. As stated in Section 2.4.3 above, (Swanepoel and De Beer, 2009:10) attest that societal and individual poverty is the result of natural, social, economic, political, psychological and cultural factors that is present in all societies and communities. These factors are dependent on each other and could either support information – seeking activities or hinder them (Wilson, 1997:560).

The others category was chosen by 2 (0.9%) male respondents who had been motivated to seek information in the others category. No female respondents,selected this option. The male respondents were motivated to seek information on crafts and tourism

4.3.3 Availability and accessibility of information for respondents in Amsterdam

In 2.6.7 above, the literature alluded to that fact that information availability and accessibility to the rural communities are poor. In a disadvantaged rural community, there is a struggle for daily survival. People are deprived of education and information. This deprivation is worsened by a lack of awareness, affordability, motivation, and information access (Seth and Parida ,2006:7). Information for the rural communities must have locally relevant content, must be presented in the local languages of the

communities, and be accurate as well as timely. Scholars in the field of library and information science, also contend that it is not enough for information to be available, but that it must also be physically accessible (Meyer, 2005:5 – 9; Iwara, 2013:2 – 3; Uga, 2007:1 – 5; Nikko and Yusuf, 2008:4).

Table 4.7 below shows that 176 (78.2%) of the respondents indicated that there was no available information in the community, while the number of respondents who said Yes was 17 (7.6%). 32 (14.2%) respondents were not sure were. The respondents indicated that they had been using family, friends, relatives and neighbours to acquire the information they needed. Studies have shown that information in the traditional rural communities was better understood and accepted when the messages were communicated in a manner and format the people understand. In a study of rural dwellers in Nigeria, Odini (cited in Kamba, 2009:15) remarked that: “Oral communication from neighbours tends to be the primary source of information due to a shortage of organized information services”. Momodu, (2002: 406) maintains that the lack of information in the right quantity and format is the reason that 70% of rural dwellers in Nigeria still live in abject poverty.

Table 4-7: Availability of information for respondents

Availability of information	Frequency	100 %
Yes	17	7.6
No	176	78.2
Not sure	32	14.2
Total	225	100%

Table 4-8: Accessibility of information for respondents

Accessibility of information	Frequency	100 %
Yes	11	4.9
No	191	84.9
Not sure	23	10.2
Total	225	100%

Table 4.7.1 above shows the respondents who indicated they had no access to information in the community were 191 (84.9%) and the respondents that indicated they had access were 11(4.9%), 23 (10.2%) were not sure

“Access to information has become the word that characterizes this phenomenon – access to education, employment, and housing, and recreation, the right to live with dignity with some measure of independence, whether or not employment is feasible. For all people, the quality of life is a more important goal, not its length or its economic productivity” (Velleman cited in Muela Meza, 2004:15). The understanding behind this study was that information must be available and accessible and packaged in the format the community was conversant with, for it to make any impact in the lives of the people. For information services to be delivered, a reliable information infrastructure is needed and to attain full potential of rural information services, communities must perceive the usefulness of the services being offered (Mtega and Roland, 2013:64). Mtega and Roland also pointed out that the mere existence of services is not a good yardstick with which to measure the success of a rural community’s information services. Rural communities for whom the services are organized should be able to recognize the benefits and usefulness of the information services being provided.

According to Gericke (2002):

Access to information is a serious issue in developing communities. The gap between the information rich and the information poor is widening by the day. The information rich include countries, communities or groups who have sufficient access to information as a resource (also as a result of information technology) and who know how to use and benefit from the information. The information poor, on the other hand, usually have limited access to information and have little or no share in the benefits of information (p 40 – 41).

Table 4-9: Frequency of visits to Amsterdam Library by respondents

Use of library resources	Frequency	100 %
Daily	5	2.2
Once in two days	13	5.8
1-3 times a week	29	12.9

Once a month	24	10.7
Occasionally	41	18.2
Never visited the library at all	113	50.2
Total	225	100%

Table 4.8 above shows the frequency of library visits by the respondents. The researcher and his assistants did a work visit to the library for two days, observing the frequency of the use of the library and collaborated our findings with the library attendance register. Very few respondents indicated daily visits to the library, only 5 (2.2%) in all. 13 (5.8%) respondents indicated that they had been to the library once in two days. 29 (12.9%) respondents had been to the library 1 -3 times a week, while the number of those who had been to the library once a month was 24 (10.7%). The number of respondents who were classified under occasional visitors was 41 (18.2%). The respondents who had either visited the library daily, once in two days, 1 -3 times in a week, once in a month or occasionally were mainly the respondents who had visited to check for adverts in the newspapers or to know if they were any job publications, internship programmes or for bursaries as indicated in Table 4.9 below

Table 4-10: Reasons for visiting Amsterdam Library by the respondents

Reasons for visiting the Library	Frequency	100 %
To read newspapers, pamphlets and brochures for current affairs	15	6.7
Checking notice boards for job opportunities and internships	43	19.1
To borrow books	26	11.6
To read in the library (not borrowing)	16	7.1
Internet services	7	3.1
For events or programmes organized in the library	5	2.2
Never used any services	113	50.2
Total	225	100 %

Table 4.9 above shows the reasons why the respondents visited the library and what they used in during the visit. 15 (6.7%) respondents indicated that they had been to the

library to read newspapers, pamphlets, brochures etc for current affairs. The respondents indicated that the newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, and brochures were not up – to - date and current. The respondents who had been to the library to check the notice boards for job opportunities and internship programmes numbered 43 (19.1%), while 26 respondents had been to the library to borrow books. 16 (7.1%) respondents indicated that they had been to the library to read books but did not borrow books from library were. The respondents also indicated that they had visited the library to watch pictures the librarian had compiled to attract users. The number of respondents that indicated internet service as their reasons was 7 (3.1%), the respondents indicated that they lacked effective internet service in the community, and most of the time they had to resort to the use of cell phones to access the internet but could not do enough due to the cost involved. 5 (2.2%) respondents had attended events organized in the library and the respondents who had never visited the library corresponded with those who had never used the services in the library and numbered 113 (50.2%).

Table 4-11: Adequacy of Library Resources

Adequacy of Materials	Frequency	100 %
Adequate	22	9.8
Inadequate	79	35.1
No opinion	11	4.9
Never visited the library	113	50.2
Total	225	100 %

Table 4.10 above shows that only 22 (9.8%) of the respondents found the resources as adequate for their purposes, while 79 (35.1%) found the resources were inadequate. The respondents who had no opinion were 11 (4.9%), while those who had never visited the library were 113 (50.3%). The researcher found that the library space could not accommodate enough reading shelves and that the space could only accommodate less than 35 people at a time. It could be the reason the respondents found it inadequate and also that the library lacked the capacity to create the required visibility to attract more users.

Table 4-12: The roles of Public Library Amsterdam in the provision of relevant information as rated by respondents

Roles of the public library	Frequency	100 %
Very satisfactory	0	0
Satisfactory	10	4.4
Fairly	22	9.8
Not Satisfactory	67	29.8
Never visited the Library	113	50.2
Undecided	13	5.8
Total	225	100%

Based on Table 4 .11 above, no respondent indicated that the role played by the library in meeting their information needs was very satisfactory 0 (0%), while 10 (4.4%) respondents indicated that the role of the library was satisfactory. Respondents who indicated the role of the library was fair numbered 22 (9.8%), while 67 (29.8%) respondents indicated that it was not satisfactory we. The respondents who had never visited the library numbered 113 (50.2%), which corresponded with Table 4.10 above. There were 13 (5.8%) undecided respondents).

Table 4-13: Services that respondents would wish to see taking place in the library

Library Services	Frequency	100 %
Linking with NGO's and other information providers	45	20
Readers' advisory service	18	8
Mobile library for outreach programmes	35	15.6
Internet services	25	11.1
Provision of up to date newspapers and magazines	20	8.9
Literacy programmes (for adults and reading for children)	27	12
Repackaging services	20	8.9

Toy section for children	12	5.3
Provision of Television/Video (Audiovisuals)	8	3.6
Government reports and publications	15	6.6
Total	225	100%

Table 4.12 above shows that the majority 45 (20%) of the respondent would want to see the library linking with NGOs and other information service providers to come to the community to teach them life skills, HIV/AIDS awareness programmes and other information services that might be needed in the community. 18 (8.0%) of the respondents indicated they would want Reader’s advisory services, while 35 (15.6%) respondents indicated that they want a mobile library for outreach programmes. 25 (11.1%) respondents indicated that they would want internet services in the library, while 20 (8.9%) respondents would want up – to – date newspapers and magazines. 27 (12%) respondents would want literacy programmes introduced in the library, while 20 (8.9%) respondents would want information repackaged in their native languages. 12 (5.3%) respondents wanted a section set aside for toys and children’s books, while 8 (3.6%) wanted a section for television sets and videos for entertainment and for information dissemination for the illiterate adults. Respondents who also wanted Government reports and publications were 15 (6.6%)

Table 4-14: Barriers facing the respondents in accessing needed information

Barriers	Frequency	100 %
Geography (e.g. distance and isolation)	47	20.9
Costs	38	16.9
Lack of time	25	11.1
Ease of use	30	13.3
Absence of effective library services	33	14.7
Lack of awareness of available information	16	7.1
Lack of local information providers	21	9.3
Personal factors	15	6.7
Total	225	100 %

Table 4.13 above shows the barriers respondents faced in accessing information. Geographic location of rural communities, costs, lack of time, ease of use, absence of effective library services, lack of awareness of available information, lack of local information, and personal factors as identified in the study, were also supported by library and information science scholars as some of the barriers to information access faced by rural people (Gericke,2002:41:Mtega and Roland,2013:70; Uga,2007: 1- 5). Library scholars have identified distance from rural residential areas to sources of information as a factor militating against information access in rural communities. The barriers to information access identified in Amsterdam corresponded with those in the literature. For example, the geographical location of a library or a community centre could hinder or encourage its use. Those who lived in the deep rural communities could not access the library in Amsterdam owing to the distance involved. The rural communities naturally find it difficult to travel from their different villages to the library, community centre or other information resource centres (Connaway, Dickey and Radford, 2011). 47 (20.9%) respondents lived in the deep rural communities, far from the library in the community and therefore could not access information from the community library owing to the distance to the source of information. Cost was another barrier that had compounded the problem, the respondents that indicated cost as a barrier were 38 (16.9%) in number. They felt isolated from the rest of the people and could not also access information as a result of the cost of transport and other logistics involved in obtaining information. According to Uga (2007:4) many users cannot afford to travel from one place to the other to obtain information. They may not be able to afford photocopying services, to browse the internet in commercial internet centers or print documents. The respondents who indicated lack of time to access information were 25 (11.1%) in number. The respondents mostly spend their time on the farms, nursing babies or doing one job or the other for the upkeep of the family and so had little time to access the needed information.

30 (13.3%) respondents indicated ease of use as a barrier. Library scholars corroborated the findings in Amsterdam concerning the format, language and presentation of locally relevant content as essential in delivering information to rural people. Studies in many African countries and in other developing communities such as

in Asia and South America have shown that rural people accept and use incoming information when it relates to their traditional mode of communication (Nyana,2009: 10 – 18; Gould, Gomez and Camacho,2010:4). Meyer (2005:11 – 13) opined: “ An understanding of the nature of information and being appreciative of the information behaviour of people used to the oral tradition can be put to good use by prospective developers wishing to contribute to the upliftment of their target groups in rural communities”. Further, “the receivers of information must know how to use that particular format, or the information will be inaccessible and useless”. The study conducted on wheat farmers in rural Iran by Dinpanah and Lashgarara (2011: 3425 – 3426) also emphasized that information – seeking, as a natural activity, means that information that targets a particular group of rural people must be communicated adequately and effectively.

Respondents who indicated absence of effective library services as a barrier were 33 (14.7%) in number. The respondents indicated that the building itself, which they said was too small to accommodate both good information resources and the community members, was a big problem. They emphasized the need to expand the library and to acquire locally relevant materials for the community. Library scholars have also identified library buildings and the information resources as some of the reasons that hinder rural people from accessing information services in the library or in other information agencies. The library and other information centers should have sections for kids, and sections for the adults with up – to – date information as found in current newspapers and magazines, audio visual materials and repackaged information, as well as librarians who are specially trained to handle rural information projects (Gericke, 2002:41 – 41; Gwang2011:4 -5).

16 (7.1%) respondents indicated a lack of awareness of available information . Kamil (as cited in Olarongbe and Ademolake,2013:12) found that rural community dwellers probably have a low expectation of the range of public services such health care services, library services, that were available to them locally. Gericke, 2002:43) asserted that “information skills relate to an awareness of information and the ability to use it. Many people are unaware that they have information needs. Information

awareness overcomes this problem, and is the ability to realize that problems can be solved by means of the necessary information”.

Respondents who indicated the lack of local information service providers numbered 21 (9.3%). The absence of local information providers was also reported in a study conducted by (Olarongbe and Ademolake, 2013: 20 – 21) in the Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria, 13 (4.9%) of the respondent indicated the absence of local information service providers as a challenge in accessing needed information in the community.

Lastly the respondents who indicated personal factors as a barrier numbered 15 (6.7%). The researcher noted from respondents, that some personal factors such as motivation to use information, which may be the result of all the factors already discussed above. Individual income levels, levels of education, age, gender roles, and perceived usefulness of information and the sources may well create a barrier that could discourage a person from accessing information (Mtega and Roland, 2013: 70 -71).

Table 4-15: Suggested solutions to the challenges of accessing information

Suggested solutions	Frequency	100 %
Provision of effective library services	27	12.0
Creation of awareness on locally available information	32	14.2
Increase in number of local information providers and caregivers such as health workers, agric extension officers, career counsellors, voluntary agencies, etc	36	16.0
Establishment of skill development and community/youth centres to bring the information services closer to the people	50	22.2
Reduce costs of accessing information	20	8.9
Establishment of information services to suit the time of community members	12	5.3
Provision of information in the format the local people are used to	26	11.6

Motivation in the use of information	22	9.8
Total	225	100 %

In Table 4.14 above, majority of the respondents 50 (20.2%) suggested the establishment of skill development and community youth centers. Statistics South Africa Census Data (2011) also reported that youths from 19 – 24, 954 (58%) were not in school and had no basic skills that could put them on the job market. They needed skills development centers in the area that could guarantee job opportunities or to be provided with basic information on how to develop themselves. In Section 2.4.4 above, (Meyer (2009: 8 – 9; Ikoja–Odongo and Ocholla (2004: 59),) were able to demonstrate the roles that information could play in the lives of rural people in Uganda and in Phokoane, Limpopo Province of South Africa respectively.

In the focus group interviews, the topic that took most of the time in the discussion was the need for a skills development center in the community for those who were no longer in school or eager to return. Two elderly respondents had this to say:

“We need skills development center in the community to help our children who are not ready to go to school and effective information for those who are ready to continue with their tertiary education. Our children are roaming around the villages aimlessly due to lack of information on education and skills development. We are in dire need of information in the community. You (referring to the researcher) are still seeing these young people in the village due to lack adequate information”

The next respondent, a woman, told us that her son could not realize his ambition to further his education because information was just not available for people like him. She had this to say:

“My son finished his secondary school education since 2008, and did very well in school, but he has been here in the village with me. We do not have any information to enable him further his education. Those who have been lucky enough to secure admission from this village did so because they have some of their family members in Johannesburg or Pretoria. We need information on education and for information service providers to come inside here to help us the rural people who do not have the money to travel outside Amsterdam”.

An increase in the number of service providers and caregivers for the respondents in Amsterdam was the next most important suggestion that 36 (16%) respondents felt could solve the challenges they faced in Amsterdam as a result of the terrain and the geographic isolation of most of the rural farming communities in Amsterdam. The respondents in Amsterdam indicated the need for more information service providers and caregivers in the villages for the provision of sustainable information. In a related study by Ziad and Popoola (2010:11), respondents in the Ekiti State of Nigeria, suggested that information centers should be established in each local government area to speed up access to information that could improve the quality of life of the rural people. Olarongbe and Ademolake (2013: 20 – 21) encountered a similar suggestion in their study in the Asa Local Government Area of the Kwara State of Nigeria.

Creation of awareness on locally available information was the third most important suggestion made by 32 (14.2%) respondents in the study. In a study conducted in Oriibi Village in Pietermaritzburg, by Zaverdinos – Kockott (2004:19), respondents also suggested that awareness should be created on the information available through the hosting of workshops, displays, and brochures to inform the people of information services available. According to Kamba (2009:15) awareness should also be created of the importance of information to the rural people. Rural communities should be aware of the information that could change their lives and contribute to community development. Information services should be vigorously marketed because availability and accessibility could not operate in isolation without information awareness. It could be marketed through the media and in print for the literate members of the community, or radio and television programmes, word of mouth, through meetings and workshops (Nyana, 2009:17).

The provision of effective library services, which was suggested by 27 (12.0%) respondents was the fourth suggestion in order of importance according to the respondents. This view was supported by Ngubeni (2004:52):

“How the public library will escape and survive being just one of the services and a force to be reckoned with for change is by finding a quick way to centre itself in the middle of change, and alter its approach to service delivery and operations. Librarians must not only be supporters of change for the better and of transformation but must also effect change themselves, and force policy makers to recognise their roles as change agents. Public libraries should, whilst providing traditional services, assume responsibility for the development of the community they operate in by recognizing the fact that while many community members cannot read and write they are not tabula rasa – they have knowledge and experiences, which need to be recognised”.

Provision of information in the format the local people are used to was suggested by 26 (11.1%) respondents. They demanded that information be provided in their native language of SiSwati – which is a mixture of the Swazi and Zulu languages. The respondents suggested that information services should be repackaged and disseminated through service providers to enable them understand the incoming information better. Table 4.4 above illustrated that the preferred or most used information sources and channels were friends, relatives and neighbours as they accounted for 51 (22.7%) answers of the respondents in the survey. Radio was the next most frequent answer with 40 (17.8%) of the respondents. It was not surprising, therefore, that the respondents were asking for information that is oral in nature with audio – visual displays and to be informed through radio and television that would target rural development services and information. Gericke (2002:42) also pointed out that the library and other information service providers to rural people should have collections in various official languages and languages of ethnic minorities if it wishes to be acceptable to the various groups in the community. Meyer (2005:9) stated that the knowledge of both the nature of information and information behaviour of users in traditional communities could help developers apply appropriate mechanisms of the target group to enhance acceptance of outside information on the one hand, and to avoid pitfalls on the other.

Motivation in the use of information featured in the suggestions made by 22 (9.8%) respondents. They claimed that they were not motivated to use the service in the library and for that reason were not even aware that some pertinent information existed in the library. Libraries and other information services must stimulate community members to

read and enable them use the resources effectively. Library use education and literacy programmes should be introduced to enhance the reading culture of traditional people who are more inclined to oral tradition (Simisaye and Quadri,2010:6 – 7; Mayer,2005:8 – 9; Gericke,2002: 65 – 74).

20 (8.9) respondents suggested a reduction in the cost of accessing information. They pointed out that the cost of accessing information was too expensive for them. Poverty, illiteracy levels, and the environmental conditions of the Amsterdam community have been highlighted in the study and they all contributed in pushing access to information out of reach of the average community member. Library scholars have attributed poor utilization of information in rural communities to the cost, distance, income and transportation (Iwara, 2013:13; Opara, 2010:4- 5; Uga, 2007:3 – 4).

The establishment of information services to suit the time of community members was mentioned by 12 (5.3%) respondents. They talked about the length of time taken to acquire the needed information. The time factor was also addressed, in a study conducted by Ikoja – Odongo and Ocholla (2004:64), as a barrier to information access. Nikko and Yusuf (2008:4) recommend that information to rural people be accurate and timely.

4.4 Chapter summary

This chapter analysed the information - seeking behaviour of the economically disadvantaged: A case study of Amsterdam community in Mpumalanga, South Africa. The researcher analysed the information – seeking behaviour, information needs, and use through the sources and channels identified by the respondents in the survey, focus group discussion, and observation of those activities in the public library environment in Amsterdam.

The researcher found that the information – seeking behaviour, needs, and use of rural respondents in Amsterdam were not different from what other studies found in the rural African communities and other rural communities outside Africa. For example, information for daily survival in Amsterdam, was the most needed information. Daily

survival in the study area centered on food, nutrition, daily income, and general economic security of the respondents. The quest for daily survival is not a problem to those who can afford daily meals but could be a very serious issue for the rural poor. While some of the respondents were engaged in subsistence farming, others had neither the land nor the knowledge to farm. Empirical studies on the information – seeking behaviour and needs of rural people have shown that rural people need economic security that enables them survive daily (Saleh and Lasisi, 2011:3; Abu Bakar,2011:5; Olarongbe and Ademolake,2013:7).

The sources and channels of information used by the respondents in Amsterdam agreed with results from some other studies on information – seeking behaviour of rural poor communities. The respondents in Amsterdam relied heavily on friends, relatives, and neighbours for their information needs followed by radio, nurses and health workers, municipality officials who were all dependent on word of mouth. With the exception of the print media such as the Excelsior and Khanyisa Newspapers based in Piet Retief and Ermelo, which use SiSwati, English and Afrikaans to reach the rural communities, all other modes of communication were through word of mouth (Jiayni, 2002:31;Zaverdinos – Kockott.2004:19).

The factors that influenced the choices of the respondents' sources were also found to be mostly the convenience of use of the sources. The researcher found that the respondents preferred friends, relatives, and neighbours because they were easier to reach in time of personal or other crises in the lives of the respondents and those sources were more affordable because in most cases within walking distance. Conway, Dickey and Radford (2011:9) found that aspects of convenience including the choice of source, ease of access and use, and time factors can be central contextual limiters in information – seeking.

The researcher also found that health reasons dominated the factors that motivated the respondents to seek information for, work or role – related reasons, school – related and for personal development. Information on agriculture, family planning and information on the environment were also mentioned. In a related study, Saleh and Gambo (2011:4) rated health information second in their study.

CHAPTER FIVE

5 Summary of findings, recommendations, and conclusions

5.1 Introduction

This study analysed the information - seeking behaviour of members of the economically disadvantaged community of Amsterdam, Mpumalanga Province of South Africa, which facilitated the identification of the factors that influenced information - seeking in the community and the actual information needs and the sources and channels the respondents used in satisfying their information needs or the identified information – gaps

To address the research problems, the following out lines from the research questions were used as shown below:

- The sources and channels that the rural Amsterdam community used in meeting their information needs
- The factors that influenced the rural communities' use of information
- The state of library and information service provision to the economically disadvantaged in the rural community of Amsterdam
- The role of the library in the improvement of information services to the economically disadvantaged rural communities

5.2 Summary of findings

5.2.1 The sources and channels that respondents in Amsterdam community used in meeting their information needs

5.2.1.1 Actual information needs

Table 4.3 above shows that the majority of the respondents in Amsterdam(45) said they needed information for daily survival. This could be attributed to the socio – economic conditions of a rural community like Amsterdam where high levels of poverty and illiteracy were still visible. The researcher found that the information needs of the respondents revolved around the need for food, nutrition, daily income (information for daily survival) which dominated their information needs..Health – related information was found to be the second major issue cited by 37 (16.5%) of the respondents interviewed. The women, as was the case in other related studies, needed information on ante – natal and post – natal care, information on women’s health, and child – care related issues as well as food and nutrition. The researcher found that in most cases that rural women needed more information due to the multiple roles they played in the communities. This finding corroborated the findings of the study conducted by Saleh and Lasisi (2011:3 – 4) on rural women in the Borno State of Nigeria. In the study, Saleh and Lasisi found that the need for information on health – related issues was only second to information on agriculture. In another study, Zaverdinos – Kockott (2004:19) pointed out that women in Mamelodi, Pretoria, South Africa, concluded that they needed information to cope with everyday problems, raise their quality of life, and participate effectively in society.

Education information was found to be the third most needed information by the respondents. 31(13.8%) of respondents mentioned this need. They reported being in dire need of information on education. The illiteracy levels of those between 19 – 24 were found to be as high as 954 (58%), according Statistics South Africa Census Data

(2011). This notwithstanding, the respondents interviewed were eager to go to school to further their education and, therefore, were in need of information that could help them realize their aim. Studies have also shown that education and training needs were high in most rural poor communities (Mtega and Roland, 2013:65; Gwang, 2011:1). The researcher also found that illiteracy was directly linked to a lack of access to information in rural communities since most of the information resources they would need for personal development and community building were all in languages other than their own and in printed format (Mansoor and Kamba, 2010:2).

Information for family and personal needs was cited by 25 (11.1%) respondents as being very important to them. The importance of the family unit as a support system was found to be strong in the community as some similar studies have also shown. In a study, Ziad and Popoola (2010: 10) found that in rural areas family constituted a basic unit of the society and that family relationships were held in high esteem in rural African communities. Diso (cited in Zaid and Popoola, 2010: 10) in support of the view on the family as a building block in rural African communities, remarked that information about marriages, childcare and juvenile delinquency is necessary information needed in the rural communities and should, therefore, be made available, to improve the lives of rural people.

The researcher found that 15 out of the 18 villages in Amsterdam lived in the deep rural areas of Amsterdam which also included the farming communities. The respondents therefore needed information on business, commercial matters and agriculture the most 21 (9.3%). They wanted information that would give them ideas that they could use to earn a living. During the research period, some of them came to Amsterdam on paydays to buy items to resell in their various villages. It was also found that they lacked basic amenities like water, sanitation and even electricity to connect with rest of the community through radio or television or to access necessary information.

20 (8.9%) respondents needed information for work – related reasons. In Section 2.4.2 above, it was suggested that, the role characteristics of a person, including his or her

professional roles were the effect of the behaviour patterns shaped within that community for that particular role; it could be the role of a mother, leader, manager, doctor, or a member of a particular group (Niedzwiedzka, 2003:3 - 4). Certain roles, as was evident from the study, required specific information.

18 (8.0%) respondents needed environmental information. According to Niedzwiedzka, (2003:4), in analyzing the users' environment, we could take into consideration the macro (socio– political and economic system of a country, local community or industry sector), mezzo environment (regional environment, local community, and a particular city) or the micro–environment of a single organization. Formal and informal information sources and channels function on all levels. Niedzwiedzka emphasized that the characteristic features of the environment may influence (stimulate or hinder) information needs and the determined behaviour.

16 (7.1% respondents sought information on financial and social security matters . The researcher found that in the other category, 2 (0.9%) of the female respondents needed information on knitting and tourism.

The researcher found that the information needs of the respondents, as diverse as they were, reflected the types of activities they were engaged in, and varied from one individual to the other in accordance with the varied socio – economic, personal and other environment - related situations in which they found themselves. The information needs of Amsterdam, based on the respondents answers could be classified into two – the first part was the basic survival information or what Bates (as cited in Talja and Hartel, 2007:9) called “life information”. In this study, life information included the socio – economic status of the people which necessitated the need for information on financial and social security benefits, business and commerce, daily survival information, which included the need for food and nutrition and general need for food security, health information, religion, and family and personal information.

The next category examined was citizenship information. It was mainly concerned with the policies of government in guaranteeing the rights of the citizens through the provision of quality education for its citizens and the provision of social amenities and information to enhance the different roles they had to play in their individual lives and in the community. The information needs mentioned above were all classified under community information. Community information was a detailed type of information that targeted a specific area, suburb, or group of people. (Dent, 2006:18).

5.2.2 Sources and channels of information

The sources and channels used by the respondents in Amsterdam were divided in two: informal and formal sources and channels of information. Respondents in Amsterdam used several sources and channels of information.

5.2.2.1 Informal sources and channels

It was found that the majority of respondents (51 (22.7%) used friends, relatives and neighbours to access day-to-day information in the community. Respondents in Amsterdam relied heavily on friends, relatives and neighbours for their day to day information needs and for immediate answers to any problem that required a quick solution. The finding conformed with other related studies conducted on the sources and channels of information in poor rural communities. This finding supported the position of Ocholla (2006: 4- 5) that, although information can be accessed textually, electronically, visually, audibly and orally, most information poor communities preferred information orally and such information needs to be provided closest to them by sources familiar to them such as colleagues, neighbours, relatives and friends. Amsterdam, as the researcher found, had few outside sources of information, so residents relied on those closest to them who had the required information. Odini (cited in Kamba,2009:15) also confirmed through a study,that, in rural communities in Africa, oral communication with neighbours, family and friends tends to be the primary source of information due to a shortage of organized information services.

7 (3.1% respondents used their personal or past experiences to solve their information needs). The factors identified in Amsterdam, such as motivation, interest, attitudes towards literature and media, reading ability and other user skills and receptivity, were therefore not the same for every individual and was found to either hinder or promote the information seeking process within a community. The Amsterdam community was made up of individuals with varying degrees of needs. In addition, these needs would eventually translate to information needs to satisfy the daily needs for survival that were identified within the community. However, the way such needs were satisfied depended, largely, on the individual. It was a process that required an information seeker to apply personal knowledge and user skills, or what might be called “personal information infrastructures” such a person’s cognitive abilities, his / her knowledge skills in relation to the problem / domain knowledge and skills in general, knowledge and skills specific to a system and knowledge and skills regarding information seeking (Ikoja – Odongo and Ocholla, 2004:58).

7 (3.1% respondents indicated that, sometimes, the religious groups they belonged to helped them with information that they needed. Some studies have shown that rural communities also depend on religious leaders and colleagues for information, but the use of religion – based groups was not very significant in Amsterdam (Abu Bakar, 2011:8; Saleh and Lasisi, 2011:4).

Teachers were also found to be a source of information for 4 (1.8%) respondents. However, in Amsterdam, very few respondents used them. Nonetheless, their services were important as some respondents found them useful in the community. The teachers and the religious groups also offered information services though on a smaller scale.

5.2.2.2 Formal sources and channels

It was found that in the Amsterdam community, 40 (17.8%) respondents also used radio to access their information needs. The problem they indicated was that radio, as a source, did not directly target their needs because the radio station is located in Nelspruit and the radio programmes that were not community - specific. Studies have also found a similar pattern in poor rural communities where village farmers even went to their farms with their battery operated radio sets but the programmes on the radio did not go far in solving the information needs of the people. In most cases, they used the radio for entertainment, for example listening to music or radio dramas (Olarongbe and Ademolake, 2013:8; Kamba, 2009:15).

Nurses and other health workers were also very prominent in transferring health information to community members as illustrated in Table 4.4 above. The rural women used the services of the nurses and other healthcare workers for pregnancy - related information, nutrition and childcare, and breast cancer issues. As other related studies have shown, women need information on the prevention of breast – related diseases and information on childcare and family hygiene (Ziad and Popoola, 2010:8 – 9).

22(9.7%) respondents used the municipal offices for information especially on essential amenities such electricity, water, sewerage and the allocation of houses. The respondents indicated that the Municipal authorities did not adequately cater for their needs. The researcher observed that a coordinated approach to information dissemination to the residents could act as a catalyst to their socio – economic development especially when planned and executed from the Municipal offices. According to Kamba (2009:14), the proper role of information resources is to provide the rural communities with information, instruction, motivation, and resources that could increase the effectiveness with which they plan for themselves.

15 (6.7% respondents indicated that they used print media) from neighbouring towns such as Ermelo and Piet Retief. The local newspapers were the Excelsior and the

Khanyisa. They were printed mostly in the local languages of the residents; i.e. in Afrikaans, English, and SiSwati. It was found, however, that the information from the local newspapers was not targeted at the people. The information was mostly of a general nature. Social, religious and gender issues, economic, educational, and geographic variables were not treated in these newspapers as was also observed in a related study conducted by Gould, Gomez and Camacho (2010:4) on the need for rural people to be provided with locally sourced content.

12 (5.3%) respondents used the public library for information. The respondents indicated that most of the books in the library were dated and that even the internet that was recently installed, was not making any difference; firstly, because access to it was limited and secondly, the library was too small to accommodate more people. According Gericke (2002:62 – 63) most of the community information should be repackaged by community librarians, and the oral tradition of the people must be used effectively to relate useful information to the people. Displays, pamphlets, brochures and newspapers from within the community should also be used. Scholars agree with the fact that community librarians must be known or must from within the community and also that they must know the community in which they are working. The librarian could make a big difference in the way the rural people accept such information centres.

Government departments were used by 12 (5.3%) respondents as shown in Table 4.4 above. However, respondents indicated that the services provided by the departments did not meet their information needs. Furthermore, most officials of Government Departments did not reside in Amsterdam so, their services were transient in nature. The respondents wanted reliable information that would target their specific information needs in the community on a continuous basis. Harande (2009:5) points out that an enhanced and effective service requires a rural information policy.

The researcher found that some voluntary organizations had visited the communities to enlighten the villagers on the prevention HIV/AIDS and other diseases and care for

sufferers. 10 (4.5%) respondents indicated that they had used voluntary groups and agencies to access health – related information. The study also found that some agencies, formerly in the community, had closed down for financial reasons. In most rural communities, voluntary agencies have been known to help with health information, education, and social issues that affect the communities. They educate people on the need to practice safe sex and to avoid multiple sex partners. They also counsel people who have alcohol and drug problems, and supply people with condoms and the necessary information on how to use them (Iwara, 2013:14).

9 (4.0%) respondents indicated that they also used television to access information. They indicated that cost and the fact that many farming communities and other rural areas within Amsterdam were yet to be electrified were the reason why most people still did not have enough television sets to access information (Mtega,2012:6).

5 (2.2%) respondents indicated that they used internet to access information. However, it is very low and only available in the library because the provincial government recently installed internet services to all the libraries in the Mpumalanga Province. The researcher found that the community did not have a single commercial internet provider. The only place where computer access was available was at the newly erected youth center. However, the center did not have any internet facility; it just has computers for those who want to photocopy their documents and to type their curriculum Vitae (CVs). It was also found that there are too few computers both in the library and the youth center for the community members. The study found that the emergence of the internet as the strongest channel for information and knowledge sharing was yet to penetrate the rural villages (Kamba, 2009:15). It was evident from the sources and channels available to the respondents, that their information – seeking behaviour was both informal and formal. And as Mtega and Roland (2013:69) also observed, in most cases, both internal and external sources of information are dominant.

5.2.3 Factors that influenced the choice of information sources

Respondents in Amsterdam preferred information sources and channels that were convenient and affordable to use as shown in Table 4.5 above. 92 (40.9%) respondents indicated convenience of use, while 70 (31.1%) respondents indicated affordability of the information sources. These were the two major factors that influenced the choice of information sources and channels in Amsterdam. Convenience and affordability could be deduced as the main reason the respondents preferred information from friends, relatives and neighbours. It was found that the geographical isolation of the respondents, costs, lack of time, ease of use, absence of effective library services, lack of awareness of available information were barriers militating against access to needed information. They therefore chose the sources and channels that they could adequately translate to practical use without thinking of the format, reliability, adequacy, and location of the sources. Other related studies have also shown that rural people rely on friends, relatives and neighbours, trusted members of the family, who have been found over the years to be men and women of honour and therefore could be considered reliable. Trusted friends, relatives and neighbours communicated the needed information in a format the respondents were comfortable with. The finding also confirmed that information from friends, relatives and neighbours, and other informal sources and channels that is oral targets specific individual problems. Informal sources and channels are the cheapest and they are also solicited as opposed to the unsolicited information from radio and television that provides general news information and entertainment (Olarongbe and Ademolake, 2013:13; Mtega, 2012:5; Mtega and Roland,2013:70). In a study conducted by Chatman (1991:438 – 449), in information seeking, “gratification theory” has it that at least, for poor people; information sources must be easily accessible.

5.2.4 The factors that influenced the respondents' information – seeking

Table 4.6 above corroborated the researcher's finding that health – related information, which was chosen by 48 (21.3%) respondents, was the most sort after information in Amsterdam. Studies on related fields supported the same findings in Amsterdam, with the establishment of a two – way causal relationship between poverty and health. Poverty affected health through poor nutrition, environmental degradation, illiteracy, harmful lifestyles, social exclusion and lack of access to healthcare (Ahmed, 2005:6;Zaid and Popoola,2010:8).

The researcher also found work – related or role – related factors as the second most important factor that influenced the respondents' information – seeking in Amsterdam, since it was chosen by 38 (16.9%) respondents. It was found that owing to the low levels of literacy and high levels of poverty in Amsterdam, some roles were very difficult to perform such of those of father or mother. Parenting was becoming difficult as a result of the economic pressures in the community and the illiteracy levels that had compounded the situation. Studies on different groups of rural communities have shown that the roles and related tasks or interpersonal variables undertaken by community members in the course of their daily practice prompts particular information needs, which in turn give rise to an information–seeking process. It means also a defined place in formal and informal communication networks. The role characteristics of a person, including his or her professional roles are the effect of the behaviour patterns shaped within that community for that particular role. The role could be that of a mother, leader, manager, doctor, or a member of a particular group (Gu, Mendonca and Wu, 2003:2;Niedzwiedzka (2003:5).

33 (14.7%) respondents chose school – related reasons, which was the third most important factor that influenced information – seeking in the community. The need for further education, skills acquisition and other development – related trainings was found to be another crucial factor that influenced information – seeking in the community, especially amongst the youth. In a study conducted by Akparobore (2011:1) in Nigeria,

it was found that low levels of literacy partly account for the low levels of development in rural African communities and that the ability of the poor rural communities to contribute to the development of their countries lies in their ability to read and write.

It was found that information for personal development, selected by 29 (12.9%) respondents came fourth in the list of the factors that influenced them to seek information. The respondents were found to be in need of information that to help them earn decent living and have a feeling of self – actualization. The respondents wanted something to give them a sense of fulfillment and self worth (Zaid and Popoola, 2010:7). Information on agriculture, which was chosen by 20 (8.9%) respondents, was also found to be an pertinent factor especially for the deep rural – residents of Amsterdam . The respondents were mainly farmers who needed information on pest control, farm subsidies, loans, proper storage of farm products, improved varieties of seeds or planting treated seeds, prevention of plant and animal diseases, and marketing techniques (Harande, 2009:4; Opara,2010:4 - 5). Mtega and Roland (2013:69) also observed in a study, that most rural communities involve themselves in agriculture and related activities; thus, these types of information were needed to increase agricultural productivity and profitability.

Information on family planning, which was chosen by 19 (8.4%) respondents, also influenced their information – seeking behaviour. The respondents were motivated to look for information on family issues such as how to solve problems in marriages, delinquent children who abused drugs and alcohol, and information for home management and the prevention of domestic accidents. Zaid and Popoola (2010:10) found the same reasons from a study they carried out among rural people in Nigeria. Only 15 (6.7%) respondents were influenced by environmental information. This may have been because respondents did not understand the impact of the environment on their general well – being. In Section 2.4.3 above, Swanepoel and De Beer (2009:10) expressed their certainty that societal and individual poverty is a result of natural, social, economic, political, psychological and cultural factors that are present in all societies and communities. The above factors identified in the environment of the community are

dependent on each other and must be considered thoroughly in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the environment in which poverty eradication and development must be tackled.

Child – care information, influenced 12 (5.3%) respondents while it was also found that information for expectant mothers influenced 9 (4.0%) respondents. Knitting and tourism information influenced 2 (0.9%) respondents. The need for economic sustainability were found to have a level of influence on the respondents and it should also be regarded as important in shaping the information – seeking behaviour of the respondents in Amsterdam. In a study conducted by Kgosiemang and Oladele in the Mkhondo Municipality of the Mpumalanga Province of South Africa, the authors indicated that 60 percent of the people of Mpumalanga live in rural areas and about 36% of the economically active population in the province is unemployed. Kgosiemang and Oladele also observed that “for many, maintaining even subsistence – level lifestyle is a daily concern”.

5.2.5 The state and roles of library and information service provision to the economically disadvantaged in the rural community of Amsterdam

The findings started with a discussion of the availability and accessibility of information in Amsterdam. The researcher found exactly what other studies in the field have revealed, that in a rural community the main pre – occupation of the people is the struggle for daily survival. Because they are poor and usually illiterate, rural people rarely plan for the future; thus they lack the information capacity for futuristic purposes. The struggle to survive daily and the deprivation are worsened by a lack of information awareness, affordability, motivation and information access. The barriers to information availability and accessibility could overwhelm them to such an extent that their only concern is to survive from day to day (Seth and Parida, 2006:7).

The researcher found that the majority, 176 (78.2%) respondents, indicated that there was no available and up – to - date information in the community.

Only 17 (7.6%) respondents indicated the availability of information in the community. Either the respondents could be among those who were not aware of the meaning of current information or they just did not care to distinguish between current and dated information owing to the high illiteracy rate in the community and the absence of information.

32 (14.2%) respondents indicated that they were not sure on how to grade the information they received in the community. The formal information available in the community was not structured to satisfy the specific information needs of the people. The same finding supported related studies on the availability of information to rural people. The studies also found that rural people are not always considered in any information policy, and that the information policies in Africa and, indeed, the rest of the developing world, is more focused on urban development, to the detriment of the rural poor (Saleh and Gambo, 2011: 4 – 5;Gould, Gomez and Camacho,2010:8 – 9;Abu Bakar,2011: 7 – 8).

191 (84.9%) respondents found information to be inaccessible in the community. Only 11 (4.9%) respondents had access, while 23 (10.2%) were not sure. According to Mtega and Roland (2013:64) for information services to be delivered, a reliable information infrastructure is needed and to attain the full potential of rural information services, communities must realize the usefulness of the services being offered. Mtega and Roland also pointed out that the mere existence of services is a good yardstick to measure the success of rural information services. That rural communities for whom the services are organized should be able to recognize the benefits and usefulness of the information services being provided. Availability and accessibility of information services in rural Amsterdam did not meet the expectations of the respondents as the findings revealed. In addition, the low levels of illiteracy and poverty were hindering the

development of the community, especially those in the deep rural areas of Amsterdam. According to Opara (2010:2) one of the prerequisites for information use is its accessibility.

- **Frequency of visits to Amsterdam community library by respondents**

The researcher found through observation and survey that only 5 (2.2%) respondents had visited the library on a daily basis., the number of respondents who had been to the library on alternate days was 13 (5.8%) and those who had been to the library 1- 3 times in a week numbered 29 (12.9%). 24 (10.7%) respondents had been to the library once a month and 41 (18.2%), were occasional users. The number of respondents who had never visited the library was 113 (50.2%), a shockingly number for a library that was situated right inside the Municipal compound where people trouped in everyday for one service or another. However, it was found that the library was not very conducive for reading and learning, based on its size and its lack of space. It could only accommodate about 35 people at any given time. The researcher found that there were some internet facilities in the library but the respondents insisted that the internet facilities and the number of computers were insufficient to help them overcome their information problems. The library space was very small; the library collection was very dated with the exception of the books that had recently been supplied to the library by the province as part of a donation to libraries throughout Mpumalanga (Hart (2006:48)

- **Reasons given by respondents for visiting the Amsterdam library**

43 (19.1%) respondents indicated that they visited the library for information on job opportunities and internship. Statistics South Africa Census Data (2011), on the other hand, indicated that the unemployment figure was 1225 (31%) in Amsterdam, while those classified as discouraged job – seekers were 503 (13%). The discouraged job – seekers did not have jobs but at the same time could not continue a fruitless search for jobs. The employed were put at 2187 (56%).

The findings revealed also that 26 (11.6%) respondents had been to the library to borrow books they used at home. This meant that some of the respondents were fully

registered library members. The study found that most of the respondents were not satisfied with the dated books and other resources in the library but they had to borrow books to keep busy at home.

Another 16 (7.1%) respondents came to read only but had never borrowed any book. It was found that the cost of registration in the library was the reason most people in the community could not register. The cost of information for rural communities is identified by other library scholars as one of the major obstacles that militated against access to information. Mtega (2012:3)

The researcher found too that, apart from the respondents who had been to the library to borrow books or to read in the library, 15 (6.7%) respondents came only to read newspapers for sports, pamphlets, magazines and brochures for current affairs. Only 7 (3.1%) respondents were attracted to the library for internet access. The low turnout could be due to the problems of space and the fact that the computers were not enough. With only 30 minutes allocated to each user of the internet, the researcher understood why the respondents were not satisfied with the internet facility. They did not have enough time to do their searches or browsing because the computers were few. It was found that programmes and events organized by the community librarian attracted 5 (2.2%) respondent. 113 (50.2%) respondents indicated that they had never used the library. The researcher found that nothing concrete had been done to make the library attractive for the non – users. A community library is expected to be the center of learning in any given community. Amsterdam library was also found to be far from the deep rural resident of Amsterdam community.

- **Adequacy of library resources in Amsterdam**

The findings on the adequacy of library resources revealed that majority 79 (35.1%) respondents who had visited the library for information, found it inadequate, while 113 (50.2%) respondents had never visited the library to look for information. The researcher found that the library had not positioned itself as the center for information provision in the community and had to do something urgently to play the roles of a

center for up – to –date information for the rural poor community. As Jiyani (2002:29) pointed out, a community information centre should be a facility where community information is adequately housed for the convenience of community members. Information that is needed by everyone in the specific rural area to successfully cope with the various roles he or she plays within the community must be made available and accessible to the rural inhabitants.

- **The roles of Public Library Amsterdam in the provision of relevant information as rated by respondents**

Table 4 .11 above, indicated the level of satisfaction with the roles that the library played in the provision of relevant information to the community. It was found that none of the respondents felt that the role played by the library in meeting their information needs was very satisfactory. Only 10 (4.4%) respondents said that the roles of the library were satisfactory.

22 (9.8%) respondents claimed that the roles of the library in the provision of relevant information were fair, while 67 (29.8%) respondents who had visited the library indicated that roles played by the library in the provision of relevant information were not satisfactory. The respondents who said the roles of the library were unsatisfactory referred to the failure of the library to provide basic information for all as reflected in the number of people in the community who were not even aware of the existence of the library. The main concern the researcher had was with 113 (50.2%) respondents who had never visited the library. The respondents who had not visited the library even once had very negative things to say about it. The negative perception may have come from what they gathered from family and friends who had used the services. 13 (5.8%) respondents were undecided and were found to be among those who could not distinguish between relevant and obsolete information.

- **Services that respondents would wish to see taking place in the library**

The majority 45 (20%) respondents would want to see the library linking up with external information service providers and NGOs for skills training, education institutions

who could enlighten the youths on the necessary steps to take in their educational pursuit and other information awareness programmes in the community.

The researcher found that 35 (15.6%) respondents wanted a mobile library for outreach programmes especially for those in the deep rural villages and farm communities. The mobile library could help the library and other information service providers reach the deep rural – based residents of Amsterdam.

It was found that 27 (12%) respondents needed to see the library provide literacy programmes for the adults and to encourage the young ones to appreciate books. They wanted the library to have more books in their native language of SiSwati for the children.

25 (11.1%) respondents also indicated the need for internet provision in the community and were very adamant that the library had to improve on that since there were no other place to access internet in the area.

It was also found that 20 (8.9%) respondents wanted the library to repackage information resources that deal with local events and other necessary information in the format and language of the people.

Another 20 (8.9%) wanted current newspapers and magazines. The absence of current information was one of the most commonly mentioned barriers to information access. A geographically isolated rural community such as Amsterdam needs up – to – date information to participate effectively in both personal and community development (Gould, Gomez and Camacho, 2010:5).

18 (8%) respondents wanted to see readers' advisory services established. This was concurred with library scholars who indicate that it is essential to promote the reading habit and library use in rural communities. Library scholars mention story – telling

sessions, reading aloud and dramatization as excellent methods of encouraging children and illiterate community members to appreciate reading (Gericke,2002:102).

15 (6.6%) respondents wanted Government reports and publications to be kept. Respondents were interested in Government publications and reports that would enable them follow the policy plans of the Government of the day. It was also found in other studies that the involvement of Government in the dissemination of information to the rural people does not only bring the desired information for community development but also keeps rural people abreast of the political, and socio – economic policies of the government (Fagbola, Uzoigwe and Ajegbomogun,2011:5 – 6).

8 (3.6%) respondents wanted television and video sets and other audio visual materials in the library (Table 4.12)., the study found that Amsterdam needed an effective library as the information center for the community, a library that would make the provision of information resources to the community its hallmark. This supports the view of Fagbola, Uzoigwe and Ajegbomogun (2011:2) that the library, as a conduit for information, serving a wide spectrum of information seekers, has a critical role to play in the facilitation of knowledge generation; hence, an unhindered access to knowledge is essential in the development process. It should serve as a liberator from poverty and deprivation and as a springboard in the quest for innovation and change.

Olaronbge *et al.* (2013:13) also suggest that a community library should provide people – oriented services, aimed at satisfying the public through the provision of appropriate resources and services, such as advisory services, strategic leadership, and information on local content that incorporates indigenous knowledge system into it.

- **Barriers the respondents faced in access to needed information**

Barriers that militate against the access to information in Amsterdam were found to be numerous and are in accord with many other rural communities in Africa as studies have shown in the literature (Uga,2007:1; Mtega and Roland,2013:70; Mtega,2012:5).

It was found that geographic isolation of 47 (20.9%) respondents who lived in the deep rural Amsterdam were more affected by this factor. The respondents could not easily access information from outside their various villages and had little or no means of coming to other areas to access the required information (Mtega,2012:

38 (16.7%) respondents found that cost was the second major problem for them., They were affected by the cost of transport, and other information related costs, such photocopying, typing and printing their documents. The absence of effective library services was also among the barriers that militated against access to relevant information in the community. The library in the community was not well suited to the role of a community library where the community members could go for relevant information. Possibly, the old structures erected under the previous regime, may be affecting the availability of library services and their quality in the Mpumalanga Province, as indicated by Hart (2007: 48).

30 (13.3%) respondents were found to be skeptical of using information from the library and other service providers because of the format, content and language. Odini (cited in Kamba,2009:15) remarked that in the rural communities of Africa, oral communication from neighbours is the main source of communication, and that even when the information is available in a non – print format it remains useless unless it is presented in a way they understand. Nyana (2009:16) also agreed with this view and opined that incorporating oral tradition in the transmission of information in rural areas is necessary since the majority of the population is unable to read or write and can not use print – based materials.

25 (11.1%) respondents indicated that lack of time was another barrier that hindered their access to information in Amsterdam. The researcher found that respondents were not always at home, especially the teachers, farmers and those who worked in the plantations. They finished working very late, almost at the exact same time that the library shut its doors for the day. Therefore, there was no way those respondents with such schedules could comfortably access any relevant information from the library or

from other information service providers for that matter. Other related studies have also found that information exchange can be inhibited by time, which is, therefore, regarded as an important factor in information – transfer strategy (Meyer, 2005: 7; Connaway, Dickey and Radford,2011:7).

21 (9.3% respondents indicated that the absence of local information providers constituted another barrier that hindered their access to information. Awoyemi and Olaniyi (2013:13) in their study remarked that information resource officers should be sourced from among rural dwellers and be trained to provide relevant and accurate information in indigenous languages.

16 (7.1%) respondents were found to lack awareness of the existing information or to articulate their information needs appropriately. It was however found, that current levels of awareness could bring about the desired awareness. Library scholars have also identified lack of awareness as one of the obstacles to access to information in libraries in particular and in the communities in general. According to Uga (2007: 2- 3); Kamba (2009:15); Ebiwolate (2010:3). Information seekers and users may not be aware of the resources available. It should be the role of libraries to market their products to the community and enhance their use through the creation of the necessary awareness for the services. Some libraries and librarians have concentrated on traditional resources and services, which might themselves be obstacles to information access and use.

15 (6.7%) of the respondents were either affected by all the barriers mentioned above or were just their own barriers to information access. In Section 2.4.1 above, Halder, Roy and Chakraborty (2010: 42) pointed out that personality is regarded as the driver of behaviour, as an important mechanism that guides behaviour. They are of the opinion that the reasons behind different information approaches may lie in the context, the person's inner processes, information habits, needs, cognitive abilities, learning outcomes and personality traits. Information seeking is a problem solving process and

in most cases it becomes an active and changeable process that is not only dependent on the situation but also on the individual that seek for information.

- **Suggested solutions to the challenges of information access in Amsterdam by the respondents**

After the identification of the barriers to information access by the respondents, the researcher found out through the suggested solutions, that the majority, 50 (22.2%) respondents, wanted the establishment of skills development and a community youth center that could go to the deep rural - residents of Amsterdam, to bring information services closer to the people.

36 (16.0%) respondents suggested that more information service providers be made available in the community. The clamour for more information service providers was the result of the lack of effective and efficient information in the community and respondents felt strongly that the presence of more service providers would alleviate the community's information problems. In the study conducted by Olarongbe and Ademolake (2013:12), respondents also needed more service providers in their community for the same reasons the respondents in Amsterdam gave.

32 (14.2%) respondents felt that awareness programmes aimed at exposing them to the information resources available in the library could change the current state of the library for the better. Lack of awareness may have been the reason that the majority of respondents, 113 (50.2%), never visited the library and only 10 (4.4%) felt that the library had fulfilled its role in the community (Table 4.11 above). The researcher agreed with other related studies that identified the lack of information awareness as an obstacle to access to information in rural communities (Ebiwolate, 2010:3).

27 (12.0%) respondents also wanted effective library services. Olarongbe and Ademolake (2013:13) conceded that the provision of effective library services to rural communities would make information more readily available to them.

26 (11.6%) respondents suggested that information in the format of the local people was needed. Studies have shown that for rural communities to accept incoming information, it must be provided in a format that the rural communities are used to. Information for the rural people must be repackaged with oral communication as the main channel to ensure accessibility (Meyer, 2009:7 – 8; kamba, 2009:15)

22 (9.8%) respondents also asked for motivational programmes as part of library services to enable their information use. They believed that motivation and awareness of the available information could help them access the resources in the library and from other information service providers.

20 (8.9%) respondents suggested reduction in the cost of accessing information, which included transport cost from especially the respondents who lived in the deep rural – based residents of Amsterdam. Iwara (2013:15) also found that distance and cost are the major barriers to information availability and accessibility in a study she conducted with rural women in Yakurr Local Government of the Cross River State, Nigeria.

The researcher also found that 12 (5.3%) respondents wanted the library to adjust its operating time to suit them. The call came mainly from teachers and other government workers who indicated that the opening and closing hours of the library did not suit their own work schedule.

5.3 Recommendations

It has already been indicated that the Amsterdam community library lacked space to accommodate library users and that owing this, less than 35 people could sit in the library at any given time; neither did the library have enough shelves for books, as most of the books were either stored in cartons or stuffed into drawers in the library. A library with a space problem such as Amsterdam's can not to have a toy section for the kids,

a conference hall for training or for audiovisual programmes for the community and most of all, render effective and efficient services to the people.

The recommendations focused on how to create effective information and library services that would provide the community members in Amsterdam with the information and the capabilities necessary for efficient participation in their personal and community development. The researcher holds the opinion that rural communities must be provided with adequate information resources and access to such information resources must be unhindered. According to Akparobore (2011:1) the uneducated, the underdevelopment, and the poor must be mobilized to build a society that is self – sufficient. The socially and economically disadvantaged have potential yet untapped and should therefore be supported to develop to their full potential which not only benefits to them but the society in general. The ability of the individual to contribute to the development of the country lies in his ability to read and write. There can not be meaningful development in modern society when the majority of the populace is illiterate and unable to access basic information.

5.3.1 Recommendations

- Based on the above, the researcher recommends expansion of the library so that the activities expected of a community library can be accommodated. The community library in Amsterdam should have enough facilities such as a mobile library and more staff to go to the deep – rural residents of the Amsterdam community to render library services to those who need the services but can not come to the library owing to costs and time factors.
- Effective library services should be the cornerstone for the provision of information resources in the rural community of Amsterdam. The information coming to the rural poor people must target the specific information needs of the people. The usefulness of any library depends largely on the relevance of the information to the everyday lives of the people and conveyed in a format known to them (Dent: 2006:28).

- Awareness programmes must be provided to familiarize the community members with the resources available in the library. They must also be given the necessary motivation and instructions on library and general information use. The rural people must be made to appreciate information as a tool for development and empowerment.
- The community librarian should have a good working relationship with other service providers both in and outside Amsterdam. The service providers outside Amsterdam could help in the provision of skills development and career guidance information. Caregivers, health workers, agriculture extension workers, and other voluntary agencies could be invited to come and render free information services to the rural people. The community librarian must ensure that local radio and television stations are conversant with community information needs by making such needs known to the media houses.

5.3.2 Conclusion of the objectives

In a conclusion to the objectives of the study, the researcher states that, with the empirical evidence available (see Chapter 4 & 5), it is clear that the sources and channels used by respondents in Amsterdam community have been successfully identified. The information needs, which were found to be similar to other rural communities in the same position, were also investigated in the study.

The critical factors that affected the community's access to information were determined and outlined to show the intervening variables that supported or impeded access to information in Amsterdam.

The state of library and information services provision in Amsterdam community was identified with suggestions and recommendations for improvement.

The conclusions of the objectives are as follows:

The sources and channels available in meeting the information needs of the respondents were identified and were found to be both formal and informal. The majority of respondents in Amsterdam relied mostly on friends, relatives and neighbours

as shown in Tables 4.3 and 4.4 respectively. They used several information sources and channels in the community that needed to be strengthened to achieve the desired results. Related studies have also found that, in rural African communities, friends, relatives and neighbours are the preferred sources and channels. Some library scholars attribute this finding to lack of alternatives on the part of the rural communities (Ocholla 2006: 4- 5). The researcher also found that even in developed countries where several information networks exist and high levels of literacy, rural people still depend on friends, relatives and neighbours for information. Marcella and Baxter 1999 found similar patterns of sources and channels among rural people in the United Kingdom. It may have more to do with trust, convenience, and affordability and lack of alternatives as well. According to Chatman (1991:438 – 449) in information seeking, the “gratification theory has it that at least for poor people, information sources must be easily accessible, and respond to an immediate concern in a timely fashion”.

The information needs of the respondents were also found to be varied based on the day – to – day activities a person was involved in the community. The researcher found that the information needs of the respondents were in accordance with their daily activities. The respondents’ information needs were also found to be diverse as they reflected the types of activities they were engaged in. These needs also varied from one individual to the other. The majority of the respondents needed information for daily survival, followed by health and education information in that order. With the exception of the three major needs, they also had all the other necessary basic human needs (Mtega and Roland, 2013:65).

Taking into account that information behaviours of groups of people emerge in response to their information needs, making sense of incoming information and how they seek and use information ultimately influences the information behaviour of the people. It is possible from such responses as acceptance, resistance, beliefs, motivation, relevance, trust and thinking to know whether the information disseminated will be well received by the rural people (Courtright, 2007; Meyer, 2009)

Regarding the factors that influenced access to information in Amsterdam, the researcher found that health related factors of the individual respondents were major on their lists of priorities, followed by work or role related reasons, school – related reasons, personal development, and information on agriculture in that order, as well as other factors shown in Table 4.6 above. All the factors found in the study were related to the person and his/ her work or role in a specific environmental context. The work or roles an individual played were determined mostly by the environment and the manner in which those roles were played and the information needed for the particular role could be attributed to personal factors. The environment could have fertile soils for agricultural purposes or posed a particular health risks that could expose the individuals in that community to a particular health problem. Geographical isolation was identified by Mtega (2012:3) as one of the major barriers to effective use of information. (Niedzwiedzka, 2003:3 - 4) argues that the role characteristics of a person, including his or her professional roles were the effect of the behaviour patterns shaped within that community for that particular role. it could be the role of a mother, leader, manager, doctor, or a member of a particular group. Certain roles, required specific information.

With Wilson's model of information – seeking behaviour (1996:257) in Figure 2.1 above, the researcher successfully identified and tested the model on the respondents' information – seeking, need and use in Amsterdam. The variables identified were personality, work or role – related and environmental factors. It was also found in the study of respondents in Amsterdam that one important psychological mechanism that guided their behaviour was personality. The intervening variables as identified by Wilson (1997:560) also corresponded with the findings in Amsterdam. The inner traits and personality dimensions of the information seekers interacted with the contextual factors that formulated the impact in the form of motivation for information, information habits, and patterns of information-seeking as well as the nature of cognitive, affective, and social utilization of information (Halder, Roy and Chakraborty, 2010:43). In this circumstance, the respondents were largely people with low literacy levels, with low

socio – economic status and isolated geographically from information resources that could enable them enjoy better lives.

Mahwasane (2008:14 - 17) also identified similar personality factors such as motivation, interest, attitudes towards literature and media, reading ability and other user skills, and receptivity. Some of these were determined largely by the social and cultural groups to which the user belonged or depended on the “situation.”

According to Huvila (2008:7) work is also a process, behaviour and a transient procedure, not a static structure. Work behaviour is often partially shared and can only be understood on the basis of its individual, cultural and societal meanings, values and purposes through an active articulation of control. Work or role – related issues depend on the context and situations of a people within a given environment.

On the other hand, Wilson (1997: 560), identifies factors within the environment that could be regarded as barriers to information – seeking. The factors are identified as: time, geography, national cultures, individualism – collectivism and masculinity – femininity and long / short – term orientation to life”. These factors according to Wilson, are the immediate situation of information – seeking activity that includes elements that represent barriers to continuing that activity, and that the wider environment could also present problems.

The library was found to be ineffective in the provision of information services to the community members. In the first place, the library was not spacious enough to accommodate more users and to render effective services to the rural community where no other form of planned information services existed. The library was found not to be performing the roles for which it was established owing to the factors identified and the suggestions in Tables 4.12 and 4.13.. The suggestion for effective library services in Amsterdam depend solely on the provision of more space that could accommodate enough shelves for books, computers for internet services, conference halls for

community activities, a toy section for the kids and reading rooms for the adults (Olarongbe and Ademolake,2013:12).

5.4 Suggested areas for future research

The study was able to identify the sources and channels used by the respondents in Amsterdam and in the process, discovered the factors that influenced the information – seeking, need and use of the respondents. Some areas for further research still exist that need investigation. Based on the widespread use of cell phone technologies for communication, and the fact that people can access information through it in today's world, the researcher would like to suggest a research based on the use of cell phones in Amsterdam as the present study did not explore this resource. The suggested research could show how cell phone connectivity had affected the information – seeking behaviour of the community members in Amsterdam, and how it could be strategically positioned to become a veritable source and channels of information for the economically disadvantaged in the deep rural villages of Amsterdam and other rural communities.

The next future study would explore the information – seeking behaviour of rural women in Amsterdam specifically. Many studies have shown that rural women bore the brunt of economic, social, cultural and political burden in any economically disadvantaged rural community. The future study on rural women in Amsterdam should be a more comprehensive mapping of the information – seeking patterns of rural women in Amsterdam to know how they access and use information, that enabled them with their daily activities since the present study had a more general outlook on the respondents in Amsterdam and therefore did not go very far in doing that.

5.5 Final conclusion

In conclusion, the study which focused on the information – seeking behaviour of economically disadvantaged communities: a case study of the Amsterdam community in

the Mpumalanga province of South Africa, revealed the information needs of the respondents and the channels they used in satisfying their information needs.

The findings revealed that the information needs of the respondents in Amsterdam were not very different from the information needs of other rural communities in Africa, as other related studies have shown (Dent, 2006:19; Mtega and Roland, 2013:64). The respondents need information for their daily activities or for daily survival in the form of information for food security, nutrition, health and for other developmental purposes.

The sources and channels were found to be both formal and informal sources and channels of information. It was found that the respondents used multiple sources and channels to access information. In the study, the majority of the respondents used friends, relatives and neighbours as their sources and channels of information more than other sources. This corroborated other related studies (Meyer, 2009:7 – 8; kamba, 2009:15). The major factors that influenced the choice of sources and channels among the respondents in Amsterdam were identified as convenience of use of the sources, affordability, and proximity. Other factors such as the reliability of information, adequacy of information sources and the format of information sources had some influence but not as much as the major ones mentioned above.

The factors that influenced the information – seeking behaviour of respondents in Amsterdam were identified as the personality, work or role – related and environmental factors. Halder,Roy and Chakraborty (2010: 42) acknowledge information seeking as a problem solving process which, in most cases, can become an active and changeable process that not only depends on the situation but also on the individual that seeks the information. Personality is regarded as an important mechanism that guides behaviour. They were opine that the reasons behind different information approaches may lie in the context of the person's inner processes, information habits, needs, cognitive abilities, learning outcomes and personality traits.

The work or role – related factor was also found to be a factor that influenced information – seeking, need and use in Amsterdam. According to Olechnicki and

Zalechi (as cited in Niedzwiedzka, 2003:4), social role is a socially conditioned and internally cohesive set of rules and expectations in reference to the desired behaviour of an individual in specific situations and is connected with his or her social position. In addition, it is a set of basic privileges, rights, and regulations related to the person's position in a group. An individual can simultaneously play many social roles and professional roles. Research on different groups of rural communities shows that the roles and related tasks or interpersonal roles undertaken by community members in the course of daily practice prompt particular information needs, which in turn give rise to an information-seeking process (Gu, Mendonca and Wu, 2003:2). Niedzwiedzka (2003:5) states that the role a person plays is situated the individual in a particular place in a social system and in an organization or community. Also it means a defined place in formal and informal communication networks.

The immediate environment of Amsterdam which included the culture of the people was also found to have influenced the information – seeking behaviour, need and use of information in the community. The economic climate which created the need for survival information, work or role – related information and health e.tc, was the product of the environment. The environment presented its own problems and opportunities. The information needed for the opportunities to be exploited was still lacking and needed to be improved for the people to take full control of their wellbeing (Yeh,2007:2). The political and the physical environment could all exert an influence on the individual and could affect his / her work or roles in a particular environment as findings in this study (Chapters 4 and 5) on the information – seeking behaviour of respondents in Amsterdam revealed (Wilson, 2000:10).

The state of the library and other information services in Amsterdam were also discovered to be below the expectation of the respondents. The library lacked both the size and space that would enable it provide effective services to all members of the community. Owing to the lack of space, the library could not play the role of an effective and efficient information center to the people. Information was not readily available and accessible to the respondents and with the absence of awareness programmes, the library was not regarded or visited as a center of information by community members.

From the findings, it was very clear that the library did not play the role of information provision and dissemination to the rural people contrary to Ajidahun's (2011:1) assertion that the library, irrespective of its form, status and typology of classification had profound potency in the provision of cultural, political and socio – economic empowerment to the society. Fagbola, Uzoigwe and Ajegbomogun (2011:2) also support the above statement from Ajidahun, and argue that the library, as a conduit for information, serving a wide spectrum of information seekers, has a critical role to play in the facilitation of knowledge generation; hence, an unhindered access to knowledge is essential in the development process. It serves as a liberator from poverty and deprivation and as a springboard in the quest for innovation and change.

In a province where 60% of the population lives in rural areas and 36% of the active population is unemployed, information dissemination for economic, social, political and cultural advancement should be considered a matter of urgency in these communities. The literature study has shown empirical evidence of how communities can rise from abject poverty through the adequate provision of rural information. The study conducted in Amsterdam also gives credence to the practicality of information for community development.

Youths between the ages of 19 – 24 had 58% rate of illiteracy in the Amsterdam community and the unemployment rate was 31%, including the 13% whom Statistics South Africa identified as discouraged work – seekers (Statistics South Africa 2011 Census Date). The illiteracy rate and the levels of poverty among those who should have been very active citizens in the community should be a source of concern to community developers and all stakeholders. Accurate and timely information on education and skills training targeted at these restless youths and the community members in general could change things for the better. These views are also shared by Malekabadizadeh, Shokrane and Hosseini (2009:1 - 3) when they reiterate the usefulness of information as a crucial factor in national development, and that the ability to use information tools is considered a source of power. This opinion is supported by Harande (2009: 1), who views information as a raw material for development for both urban and rural dwellers. Harande has also indicated that

prosperity, progress, and development of any nation depend upon the nation's ability to acquire, produce, access, and use pertinent information. Access to information and advice is seen as a key resource for local people in maintaining active and independent lives.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire for in – depth interview

We all need information to help us in decision – making or to solve different problems. In fulfillment of my Master’s degree in the Department of Library and Information Science, University of Fort Hare. The in – depth interview, the observation conducted in the library and the focus group discussions were used to draft the final survey questionnaire that was in the study to investigate the information – seeking behavior of economically disadvantaged communities: A case study of Amsterdam, Mpumalanga Province of South Africa. Please note that there is no right or wrong answer. However, it is expected that your responses are honest.

In – depth interview schedule:

1. What kind of information do you require in this community?
2. What do you need the information for?
3. Explain the information sources and channels you use for the purposes of meeting your information needs
4. How satisfied were you with the information you obtained?
5. What can you say are the factors that determine or motivate you to seek for information in your community?
6. How would you rate your local library in meeting your information needs?
7. What are the barriers you face in accessing needed information?

Appendix B: Questionnaire for Focus group interview

1. What does the term information need mean to you?
2. Have you ever needed information to solve any problem in the community?
3. What is the condition of library services in your community?
4. How satisfied are you with the roles of the library in the community?
5. Are you a member of any type of library both within and outside your community?
6. What are the factors that have motivated you to seek for information in the community?
7. What suggestions can you give for the improvement of library and information services?

Appendix C: Questionnaire for survey

We all need information to help us in decision – making or to solve different problems. In fulfillment of my Master's degree in the Department of Library and Information Science, University of Fort Hare. The investigation as earlier stated is on the information – seeking behavior of economically disadvantaged communities: A case study of Amsterdam, Mpumalanga Province of South Africa. Please note that there is no right or wrong answer. However, it is expected that your responses are honest.

1. Please indicate your gender.

Male		Female	
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2a. Are you employed? Yes No

2b. If your answer to question 2a above is yes, please indicate the length of time you have been in formal employment. (Please tick the correct answer from the box).

Less than 1 year	
1 – 2 years	
3– 4 years	
5 – 10 years	
10 years.	

3. Please indicate your age bracket

18 – 26 years	
27 – 34 years	
35 – 42 years	
43 - 50 years	
51 –	

65 years	
-------------	--

4. What is your highest formal education level?

(Please select one answer below by ticking in the box corresponding to the correct answer).

Matric or less	
Certificate or national diploma	
Bachelor's degree	
Honours degree or more	
None of the above	

5. What is your post – qualification work experience?

(Please cross one block below)

1 – 2 years	
3 – 5 years	
6 – 8 years	
9 – 10 years	
10 years	

SECTION B: INFORMATION NEEDS OF THE ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED

6. What kind of information do you require in the community?

(Please cross the appropriate blocks below)

Information about employment/ job opportunities	
Survival information	
Health and safety issues	
Education	
Religious matters	
Family / personal matters	
Financial matters/ social security	
Environmental information	
Work – related issues	
Legal matters/citizens' rights	
Others (Please specify)	

7. What do the residents need information for?

(Please cross the appropriate box or boxes below.)

Work – related reasons	
Job seeking	
Health	
Legal matters	

Financial matters	
Business/ commercial matters	
Religious issues	
For political decision – making	
Family/ personal matters	
Education	
Other (please specify)	

8. What are the sources and channels used by community members to access information?

Public libraries	
Voluntary groups and agencies	
Municipal office	
From personal sources	
Religious groups	
Offices of Government departments and agencies	
Television	
Radio	
Newspapers	
Internet	
Friends/ relative/ neighbours	
Teacher	

Personal/ past experiences	
Nurses/ Health workers	
Other advice centres (please specify)	

9. What are the most popular sources of information in the community? (please tick the correct answers below. You can pick more than one sources)

Public libraries	
Community Information centres	
Voluntary groups and agencies	
Municipal office	
From personal sources	
Religious groups	
Offices of Government Departments and agencies	
Television	
Radio	
Newspapers	
Internet	
Teachers	

Nurses/ health workers	
Friend / relatives / neighbour	
Other advice centres (please specify in the line below)	

10. Were the information you obtained easy to use? (Please choose your answer from the lists below)

Easy to understand	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Relevant	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Accurate	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Up to date	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Format	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No

11. Were there any kinds of information which might have helped you, but which you found difficult to obtain? (please tick the appropriate box below)

Yes No

If your answer to the above question is yes, please provide details of the kind of information you found difficult to obtain: -----

12. In the situation or instance you have just described can you state for me the most important question or questions you needed to answer, most important things (s) you wanted to learn or find out. (please specify)-----

13. Was this situation / instance

Work related? School related? Not work related or school related?

But-----

14. How would you rate the role of your local library as a sources of information or how would you rate the role of your local library in meeting your information needs? (Please tick the right box below)

Very Satisfactory	
Satisfactory	
Fairly	
Not satisfactory	
Never visited the library	
Undecided	

-Please you can elaborate more on your answer-----

15. Are you satisfied with the condition of your library and other information services in your community? (Please cross the appropriate block below)

YES	NO

Please feel free to elaborate-----

16. What are the factors that influenced your choice of information sources?(please cross the appropriate block)

	YES	NO
Proximity to the information source		
Affordability of the information source		
Reliability of the information sources		
Format of the information source		
Adequacy of information source		
Convenience of use of the source		

SECTION C: FACTORS DETERMINING INFORMATION – SEEKING BEHAVIOUR OF THE ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED.

Identify the factors that determine information – seeking behaviour of the economically disadvantaged communities of Amsterdam.

17. What can you say are the factors that determine or motivate you to seek for information in your community? (please specify by ticking the appropriate box / boxes below.)

For personal development	
For expectant mothers	
Child - care	
Health reasons	
School related activities	
Work related activities	
Information on agriculture	
Family life	
Environmental factors	
Others (Please specify)	

SECTION D: WAYS OF MEETING INFORMATION NEEDS OF THE ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED. Find out what libraries are doing to meet the information requirements of the economically disadvantaged.

18. How often do you visit your local library? (Please specify in the blocks below).

	YES	NO
Daily		
Once in two days		
1-3 times a week		

Once a month		
Occasionally		
Never visited the library at all		

19. What are the reasons for visiting your local library?

	YES	NO
To read newspapers, pamphlets and brochures for current affairs		
Checking notice boards for job opportunities and internships		
To borrow books		
To read in the library (not borrowing)		
Internet services		
For events or programmes organized in the library		
Never used any services		

20. How adequate are the resources in the library when you visited?

	YES	NO
Adequate		
Inadequate		

No opinion		
Never visited the library		

21. Are the information available in the community

	YES	NO
Yes		
No		
Not sure		

22. How accessible were information in the community

	YES	NO
Yes		
No		
Not sure		

23. What are the barriers you face when accessing needed information?

	YES	NO
Geography (e.g. distance and isolation)		
Costs		
Lack of time		
Ease of use		
Absence of effective library services		
Lack of awareness of available information		

Lack of local information providers		
Personal factors		

24. SECTION E: IMPROVEMENT OF INFORMATION SERVICES. Suggest ways of improving library and information services to the economically disadvantaged rural communities.

What are the ways of improving the library and other information services in the community?

	YES	NO
Linking with NGO's and other information providers		
Readers' advisory service		
Mobile library for outreach programmes		
Internet services		
Provision of up to date newspapers and magazines		
Literacy programmes (for adults and reading for children)		
Repackaging services		
Toy section for children		
Provision of Television/Video (Audiovisuals)		
Government reports and publications		

If you have anything more to suggest, please feel free to do so. (please specify what you think)

The questions as they appeared in the study were used strictly as guidelines but the researcher and his assistants probed and interacted deeply with the respondents throughout the process of the fieldwork.

APPENDIX D: Questionnaire for Observation conducted in the library

1. What kind of information do you require from the library in your community?
2. Explain the other sources of information and channels you use for the purposes of meeting your information needs
3. How satisfied were you with the information you obtained from the library?
4. How would you rate your local library in meeting your information needs?
5. What are the barriers you face in accessing needed information in the library?

PLATE 1.1: The assistant librarian at work in Amsterdam Public Library



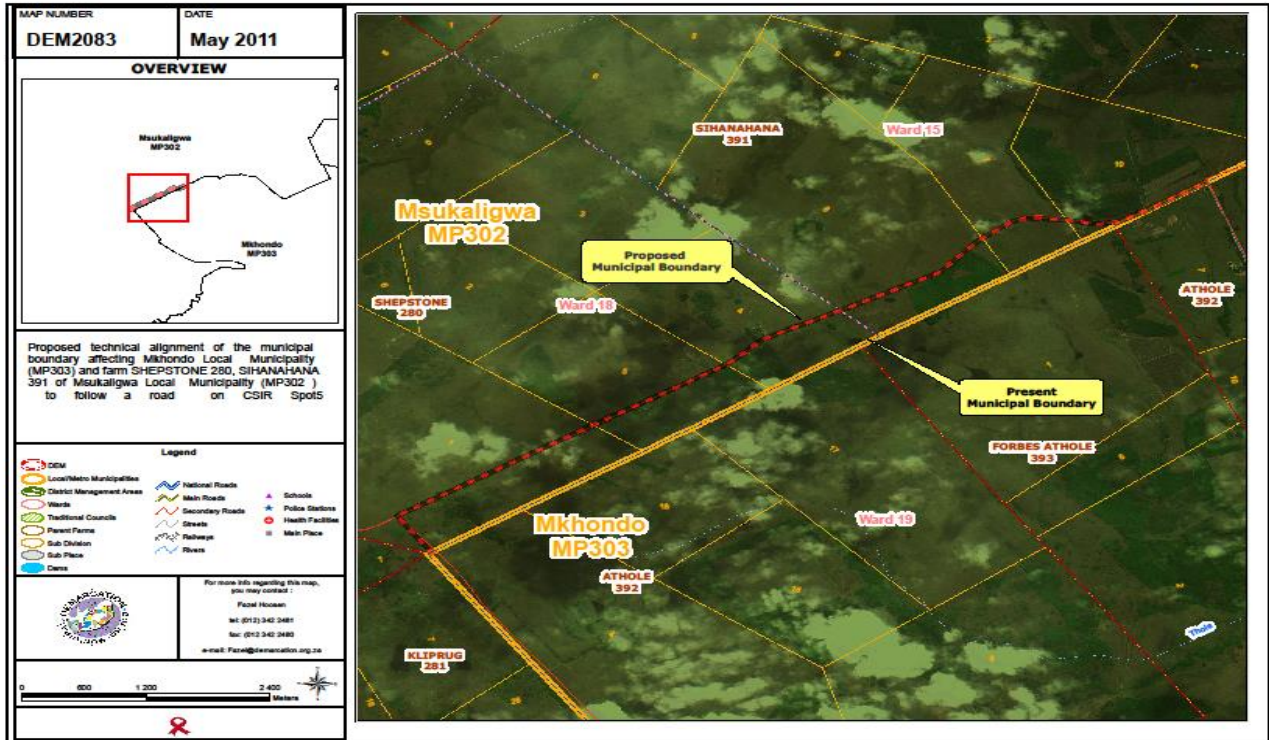
Mrs. Rebecca Nkambule, the assistant – librarian with Amsterdam Public Library.

Plate 1. 2: Amsterdam Public Library



Public Library Amsterdam

PLATE 1.4: Demarcation Board proposal for Mkhondo Municipality



SOURCES: MUNICIPAL DEMARCATON BOARD 2011

APPENDIX E: Authorization letter to conduct research

MKHONDO MUNICIPALITY
MUNISIPALITEIT

Alle Korrespondensie moet gerig word aan
DIE MUNISIPALE BESTUURDER

All Correspondence to be addressed to
THE MUNICIPAL MANAGER



Enquiries: SW Mngomezulu

Ref:

Date: 25 / 09 / 2013

TO : THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

ATT. : PROF EM ONDARI-OKEMWA

FROM : SW MNGOMEZULU

SENIOR MANAGER : SATELLITE OFFICES

SUBJECT : INFORMATION-SEEKING BEHAVIOR OF ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED
COMMUNITIES

Prof,

This letter serves to confirm that Mr Chimezie Obi duly conducted a study in Amsterdam. Amsterdam is a rural town in Mkhondo local Municipality which is one of the seven Municipalities in the Gert Sibande Region, Mpumalanga Province.

The study took place between November and December 2012.

I want to vouch for him that he conducted his study in a very professional way.

Your assistance to his academic Endeavours is highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,


SW MNGOMEZULU
SENIOR MANAGER SATELLITE OFFICES

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25 SEP 2013
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THANKS FOR YOUR COOPERATION