A framework for setting up pastoral information services in Namibia

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Abstract

This paper is based on a study entitled "Information needs and information seeking behaviour of Namibian pastors". The study aimed to establish the information required by pastors to carry out their work; how they seek information and the problems they encounter in doing so. One of the study's objectives was to come up with a framework for setting up pastoral information services in Namibia. The study used a mixed methods research design employing both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. In this paper, the authors propose a framework for setting up pastoral information services for Namibian pastors. The framework is based on the premise that information service providers need to analyse the pastors' contexts, motivating factors, prevailing circumstances, information seeking behaviours and information use.

Introduction

Information need is a recognition that knowledge is inadequate to accomplish a task, while information seeking behaviour is what a person does in pursuit of information to satisfy a perceived need. Wilson (1999) proposes that an information need is not a primary need, but a secondary need that arises out of needs of a more basic nature. It is the environment or the role one plays that motivates an information need. Wilson (1997, p. 553) further notes that the concept of information need can be divided into three categories:
- physiological needs such as the need for food, water, shelter, etc.;
- affective needs such as the need for attainment, for domination, etc.; and
- cognitive needs such as the need to plan, to learn a skill, etc.

According to Harris and Dewdney (1994), information needs arise from the seeker's situation or the need to bridge or close a gap in information (Dervin, 2003). In the case of pastors, the situation could be the need for information to counsel an HIV positive person or an AIDS patient, or to deal with mentally challenged people. According to Case (2006) information seeking behaviour refers to strategies employed by individuals in search of information to satisfy a need. It includes the search of sources and channels to meet their information needs and preferences for messages on particular subjects. Despite varying definitions of information needs, the consensus is that an information need arises when the present level of knowledge is too limited to deal with a new situation (Case, 2006; Dervin, 2003).

Pastors play a very important role in the society. The President of Namibia, Hifikepunye Pohamba, called on religious leaders to consult on the issue of moral decay in the country (Nunuhe, 2013). Their responsibilities not only include preaching but sometimes counselling e.g. people living with HIV and AIDS (Warren, 1995, p. 49). As pastors work with individuals, families, and nations, they definitely need information. The study on which this paper is based, investigated the information needs and information seeking behaviour of pastors in Namibia.

Studies of information needs and information seeking behaviour are known as "user studies" (Carr, 2006; Eskola, 1998; Mann, 2005). These studies have resulted in a number of information seeking models. A "model" in this case means a framework for thinking about a problem, which attempts to describe an information-seeking activity and the causes and consequences of that activity (Wilson, 1999). Proposed models typically designed for information seeking behaviour are, for example Wilson's (1996) model of information seeking behaviour, Dervin's (2003) sense-making theory, Ellis' (1989) behavioural model of information seeking strategies and Kuhlthau's (1991) model of the stages of information-seeking. Behind these models is the belief that information seeking follows the recognition of some information need perceived by the user.

The study on which this article is based, applied Wilson's model of information seeking behaviour (Wilson & Walsh, 1996) and partly the sense-making theory developed by Dervin (2003). In an effort to discover information to satisfy a need, the enquirer is likely to meet with various barriers. The context of the needs may be the person's circumstances or the demands of the person's work (Wilson & Walsh, 1996). The central idea of the sense-making theory is that as people move through time and space, they develop unique points of view as a result of personal experiences and observations, and at some point there arrives a gap, where the ability of making sense runs out, which then needs to be bridged. It is this gap that also causes a person to become an information seeker with the aim of bridging the gap. This implies that when pastors are confronted with information demands in their different roles, they use the information they have accumulated over the years, but when that information becomes inadequate, they are inclined to seek relevant information elsewhere.

Objective of the article

Information service providers need to establish how pastors seek information and the problems they encounter in doing so. This article highlights the information needs and information seeking behaviour of pastors as well as factors which may affect their information seeking behaviour. The article aims to influence policy

and decision makers and religious information service providers by suggesting a framework for pastoral information services.

Methodology

The study which served as basis for this article used a mixed methods research design employing both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. A stratified quota sample of 200 pastors was used. One hundred and thirty-eight (69%) of the participants responded to the questionnaire, while 16 pastors from different denominations in Windhoek, purposively selected as key informants, were interviewed. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) basic level descriptive statistics was used to analyse quantitative data from the questionnaires, while content analysis was used to analyse qualitative data from the interviews.

Findings and Discussion

Information needs of pastors

The findings from questionnaires and interviews revealed that information is important in order for pastors to properly perform pastoral duties. People need information to work properly in their different roles no matter how well experienced they are (Tahir, Mahmood & Shafique, 2008).This confirms the opinions of other scholars (Boon, 1992; Martin, 1984) that information is power when it is used and applied effectively. Figure 1 below presents data on the information needed by pastors in order to carry out specific duties indicated.

Figure 1: Information needed by pastors
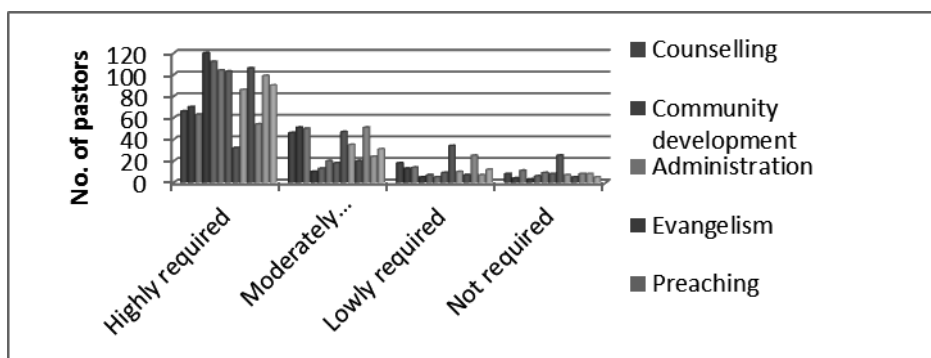
Pastors in Namibia need information for counselling, community development, administration, evangelism, preaching, directing prayers, leading Bible study, member care, teaching, public relations, leading a service and running youth programmes. This confirms findings from several studies (Wicks, 1999; Staman, 2010; Lambert, 2010) which describe clergy as purveyors of information about a variety of themes.

In a study on the information seeking behaviour of professionals, Yousefi (2007) concludes that information needs and information seeking behaviour differ depending on the roles or contexts in which individuals serve. The findings showed that pastoral duties or roles determine the type of information pastors would look for and how they look for it. Tanner (1994) argues that pastors' information seeking behaviour is influenced by other factors such as congregational rules and regulations. However, denominational or congregational literature reviewed during this study did not show that the pastors were restricted to using any type of information by their churches. This could be something pastors learned or developed during training in theological institutions.

Pastors indicated that they needed information to prepare for teaching, personal growth, current awareness and counselling people with different problems. Other professions too, need special information for fulfilling duties. A study by Khan and Shafique (2011) on "college teachers", revealed for instance that college teachers need information for lecture preparation, improvement of their personal competencies and current awareness. Information sought by pastors was not only to cover for current needs but also to overcome an anticipated gap in information relating to the future. It was evident from the study that the roles of pastors in Namibia are not very different from those of pastors in other countries. A study by Wicks (1999) on the information needs of American pastors, revealed the same apart from the fact that churches in Namibia (Africa) are confronted more with health issues (death and sickness in the family) than philosophical issues (does God really exist) (Coertze, 2005).

Information seeking behaviour of pastors

In this study, information seeking behaviour was seen as those activities that pastors pursue in order to obtain required pastoral information. The findings show that pastors (76.8%) turn to personal libraries very often while only 1 (0.72%) indicated that he/she turns to the university library. Wicks (1999) states that pastors close themselves off to outside information because they are overwhelmed by the quantity of information available in books and online. Wicks further noted that pastors may choose not to cross the boundaries of their congregations, denominations and theological worlds. The findings of this study support Wicks'

views since pastors pointed out that they use personal libraries because they trust the information sources and are able to access them at any given time without having to travel. This study's findings are also in line with findings of a study by Leckie, Pettigrew and Sylvain (1996) on "Modelling the information seeking of professionals" which revealed that while convenience is the most important factor when choosing a source, reliability, comprehensiveness, timeliness and cost are also considered.

Another information behaviour highlighted from interviews conducted with the pastors is that pastors turned to both printed and unprinted sources of information. They also relied on personal knowledge, personal experience, and the experience of co-workers. These findings are similar to studies by Ryden (2008) and Wicks (1999) which revealed that pastors turn to formal (books) and informal (other pastors) sources of information. Bokhari's (1976) study on information needs of engineers also found that participants consulted both formal (written) and informal (other engineers) sources of information to meet their information needs.

Pastors in this Namibian study indicated that they do not use public libraries but instead rely on personal libraries. These findings are similar to the findings of a study of engineers by Leckie, Pettigrew and Sylvain (1996) which revealed that engineers have little use of public libraries and instead, reliance is placed on personal information sources.

Information sources used and how they are used

Pastors, like any other professionals, depend on information to perform their duties. Pastors consult the Holy Spirit and use reference information sources such as Bible concordances, Bible commentaries, different Bible translations, theological works, Bible study aids, background information to the Bible, devotional books, church history books, lectionaries and information sources on missions, pastoring and worshiping to perform their duties. The findings of the study also indicate that pastors consult other experienced pastors. Table 1 below presents data on the information sources used by pastors.

Table 1: Information sources used by pastors
N=138

Information source	Very often	Quite often	Not very of-ten	Not at all
Church docu-ments	64 (46.38%)	54 (39.13%)	20 (14.49)	0 (0%)
Other pastors	21 (15.22%)	59 (42.75%)	54 (39.13%)	4 (2.90)
Television	13 (9.42%)	48 (34.78%)	58 (42.03%)	19 (13.77%)
Radio	18 (13.04%)	69 (50.00%)	41 (29.71%)	10 (7.25%)
Newspapers	23 (16.67%)	71 (51.45%)	32 (23.19%)	12 (8.70%)
Public libraries	7 (5.07%)	15 (10.87%)	68 (49.28%)	48 (34.78%)
University librar-ies	1 (0.72%)	23 (16.67%)	66 (47.83%)	48 (34.78%)
Internet	69 (50.00%)	50 (36.23%)	13 (9.42%)	6 (4.35%)
Church members	20 (14.49%)	41 (29.71%)	66 (47.83%)	11 (7.97%)
Personal library	106 (76.81%)	25 (18.12%)	3 (2.17%)	4 (2.90%)

During the interviews pastors emphasised their need and dependence on the Holy Spirit as a source of information. Other researchers (Michels, 2009; Wicks, 1999) on the information seeking behaviour of pastors came up with similar findings. How pastors communicate with the Holy Spirit was not the main objective of this study and this could be a topic for further research.

The preference for personal libraries is consistent with findings from other information seeking studies for example, Lilley (2008) and Michels (2009). People feel free to ask for information from people they already know and relate to. Although other pastors were regarded as information sources, it was noted from the interviews that there are limitations to making active use of this source as trust and respect were highlighted as major contributors or barriers in determining who to approach for help. Wicks (1999) also concluded in his study of information needs and seeking behaviour that pastors, in their choice of information sources, may choose not to cross the boundaries of their congregational, denominational and theological worlds unless they are fulfilling specific roles. For example, he says that they are most open to outside information in their roles as care-takers.

Factors affecting pastors' information seeking behaviour

The study revealed a number of challenges pastors face when seeking for information. These are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Main difficulties pastors in Namibia face in obtaining information
N=138

Main difficulties faced in obtaining information	Major difficulty	Occasional difficulty	Not a major difficulty	Not difficult at all
It takes too long to get the information I want	40 (28.99%)	32 (23.19%)	46 (33.33%)	20 (14.49%)
I do not know where to get the information I need	20 (14.49%)	38 (27.54%)	39 (28.26%)	41 (29.71%)
The process of getting the information is too complicated	18 (13.04%)	30 (21.74%)	56 (40.58%)	34 (24.64%)
I do not know if the required information exists	20 (14.49%)	38(27.54%)	39 (28.26%)	41 (29.71%)
The information I want is too expensive	65 (47.10%)	23 (16.67%)	20 (14.49%)	30 (21.74%)
The information I get is of poor quality	26 (18.84%)	28 (20.29%)	37 (26.81%)	47 (34.06%)
The information is not available in my language	68 (49.28%)	15 (10.87%)	24 (17.39%)	31 (22.46%)
I do not know how to identify relevant information sources	17 (12.32%)	17 (12.32%)	39 (28.26%)	52 (37.68%)
The information I get is not always correct	17 (12.32%)	31 (22.46%)	43 (31.16%)	47 (34.06%)
I have no access to Internet or computer	77 (55.80%)	13 (9.42%)	14 (10.14%)	34 (24.64%)
The information is not always available when I want it	17 (12.32%)	31 (22.46%)	43 (31.16%)	47 (34.06%)

I do not like to ask people	58 (42.03%)	20 (14.49%)	24 (17.39%)	36 (26.09%)
I cannot find the in-formation I want	12 (8.70%)	36 (26.09%)	41 (29.71%)	49 (35.51%)
I do not know what information is re-quired	17 (12.32%)	30 (21.74%)	39 (28.26%)	52 (37.68%)
I do not know what information sources are available	15 (10.87%)	32 (23.19%)	33 (23.91%)	58 (42.03%)

Data from the questionnaires and the interviews revealed that some pastors did not have computers, lacked computer skills, and did not have money to subscribe to relevant Internet resources or to buy books. These challenges which pastors face are not unique to them. A study by Khan and Shafique (2011) revealed that major obstacles faced by some college teachers include a lack of computer hardware and software and formal training on using online information sources. Having the information sources but lacking the skills to use them is not helpful at all. Some pastors had computers and money to connect to the Internet but they lacked the skills to use the computers. Markus (1987) argues that in order to expedite the use of ICTs, organisations need to provide training sessions for their employees to encourage their use of technology. Some studies (Sharma & Yetton, 2003; 2007) seem to support Markus' argument that training contributes to technology use in organisations. If pastors are to benefit from the resources they have they need proper training on how to use them.

Language is another situational barrier that can inhibit free access to pastoral information. Data from the questionnaires and the interviews with the pastors indicate that some pastors found it difficult to understand information sources not written in their mother language. Language is a barrier to accessing information as it affects many and is not confined to pastors. A study by Lilley (2008) investigated the information barriers encountered by Maori secondary school students when seeking information in different cultural contexts. The study showed that language barriers were identified as a critical problem. The information was not the same when it was translated into English. Some information was lost during translation. Information found on the Internet was generalised, and people who were not informed wrote the information without stipulating from which cultural group the information was taken or coming from. These sentiments were echoed by some pastors during the interview. Similarly, a study on access to health information by Eriksson-Backa (2008) revealed that the use of some terms, especially medical terms, and the unavailability of information sources in the mother

tongue of people were obstacles to information seeking. In this particular study, pastors confirmed that the reference sources they use to interpret the Bible are not written in their vernacular languages. It can be concluded that pastors do not use information services when the information is irrelevant and non-responsive. Information must be available, relevant, readable, and written in a language people understand.

Another barrier that was identified is the environment. The Namibia study revealed that some pastors were not willing to share information with pastors who did not come from their group. A study by Wicks (1999) revealed that when the social network theory is applied to information needs, the premise is that the particular social networks to which individuals adhere to affect the way in which they seek information.

Some pastors pointed out that books were very expensive in Namibia and that their salaries were very low and so they could not afford to buy books. This is not a problem restricted to Namibia. In South Africa, the South African Book Development Council (2007) carried out a study on the factors influencing the cost of books and came to the conclusion that the cost of books was beyond the reach of the majority of people. Leckie, Pettigrew and Sylvain (1996) argue that the cost involved with accessing a particular source will also affect the decision of the professional where to use it or not.

A further challenge is that the information did not speak to some pastors' given contexts or cultural settings. Dosa (1985) argues that the relevance of an information source and the services offered by the library increases its chances of acceptance and use. The quality of information and information source are sometimes the criteria that guide an individual's information seeking behaviour (Lee & Cho, 2011). Pastors also indicated that they did not use public and university libraries for a number of reasons. The first was that the information sources in these libraries were too academic while they needed more devotional materials. The information sources tended to question the authority of the Bible and hence such materials could not be trusted. They also pointed out that the information sources in these libraries were not relevant to their work. Relevance relates to such things as the background, time, place, persons and recent ideas, statements and events. Public and university libraries may have good pastoral information sources but unless pastors see them as relevant, they will be of no use to them.

Some pastors indicated that they did not use theological college libraries. They also pointed out that these libraries were not easily accessible. In order to use theological libraries they had to travel long distances to get the information.

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However, the nature of their duties required them to have quick access to information. Despite the pastors in Namibia having rated information on counselling, community development, administration, accounting, member care, public relations and running a youth programme as 'highly required', the pastors indicated that such information was not "highly accessible". Reitz (2014) defines accessibility of information sources as the ease with which a person may enter a library, gain access to its online systems, use its resources, and obtain needed information regardless of format. Accessibility of information sources means that the user can identify and use the resources, while availability means ensuring that the information sources are presented in the library for their immediate use (Agulu & Aguolu, 2002). Kuhlthau (1991) points out that the choice to seek information depends on its perceived accessibility. Iyoro (2004) examined the contribution of accessibility to learning processes and reported that information users make use of a library when information is easily and conveniently accessible to them. This confirms why pastors could not always use libraries.

Another barrier that was revealed is the fact that some pastors did not like to ask people for information. These pastors could fall within those users described by Wicks (1996) as those who, when they do use libraries, they tend to function independently of librarians.

Pastors' views on how to improve pastoral information services

Pastors were asked how best they would want to be helped in order for them to have reliable pastoral information. Although only 5 pastors out of one hundred and thirty-eight responded to this question in the questionnaire, these few responses reveal that pastors would like local churches and their theological colleges to play a leading role in the provision of pastoral information. They indicated that they would appreciate it if their churches could have a monthly budget for them to buy books and that theological colleges should open up their libraries to pastors. They also expressed the need to help theological students to build their personal libraries before they graduate. There was consensus that theological colleges and churches should put a system in place to repackage information sources for pastors.

Pastors expressed that pastors should be taught how to use computers in theological colleges and such skills should be updated periodically with the help of their churches and theological colleges. Some pointed out that they should be assisted to record and repackage their teachings or even create a website of sermons by Namibians for Namibians. They also indicated that it would be helpful to record ministry experiences of older and experienced pastors. During interviews,

some pastors expressed the need for study tours to expose pastors to different life situations.

For information services to be successful, the service providers must shift the focus from themselves to the information consumers. Kunneke (2001) argues that the consumers' needs must guide organisational frameworks. Most of the pastors expressed the need for re-packaging information. Iwhiwhu (2008) defines repackaging as the bundling of products and services to address specific needs. Repackaging can take many different forms such as drama, storytelling, songs, abstracting, indexing, selective dissemination of information (SDI), translation services, bibliographies and special bulletins (Boadi, 1987).

Aina (1991) suggests that information providers should be willing to interpret, repackage and apply information to the user's situation and help communities to act on the information they have received. It is therefore imperative that information be interpreted and converted into forms that the user can understand and assimilate. Iwhiwhu (2008) reiterates that repackaged information should give an avenue for feedback to determine users' satisfaction. Iwhiwhu (2008) further notes that users will return to the library to use the available products and services.

A framework for setting up pastoral information services

Basis for the proposed framework

A proposed framework for setting up pastoral information services should address the barriers to the effective provision of pastoral information services as identified in the Information Behaviour Model (Wilson, 1999) and this particular study. The barriers may be psychological, demographic, role-related, interpersonal, environmental or information source characteristics. Table 3 summarises the problems highlighted in the study and what the framework will address.

Table 3: Problems identified in the findings and what the framework should address

	Problem/ issue coming from the findings	How the framework should address the problem
1	High cost of books	Lobby government for a free import duty on information sources
2	Information not contextual	Encourage informal sharing of information by experienced pastors

3	Lack of comprehensive and relia-ble information	Libraries need to find out what infor-mation sources are needed by pastors.
4	Lack of good theological books	Encourage pastors to write theological books in their own languages
5	Lack of skills to use computers and search the Internet	Organise conferences to equip pastors with computer and Internet skills.
6	Existing information is in foreign languages	Translate and repackage information into local languages and in formats that can be easily accessed by pastors
7	Internet information is published by people who have no idea about the Namibian context	Encourage local pastors to upload and publish information on the Internet
8	Bible translations in local lan-guages lost original meaning of the Bible	Educated locals need to properly trans-late the Bible.

Before proposing a framework, there is need to first define pastoral information services. Based on the established facts in this study and the literature review, pastoral information services can be defined as pastoral support services that provide pastors with pastoral information. It is important that the goals and objectives of pastoral information services are defined before it is implemented. Most of the objectives defined by Chiware (2008) for business information services can be adapted for pastoral services as follows:

- To co-ordinate the provision of pastoral information services
- To collect various types of pastoral information from external and internal sources and re-package them for pastors;
- To provide a range of pastoral information sources in both print and electronic forms;
- To create various print and electronic databases for use by pastors and their different churches;
- To provide an inquiry-and-answer service for pastors;
- To provide facilities for accessing the Internet to enable pastors to access relevant electronic databases;
- To promote the sharing of pastoral information among pastors; and
- To raise funds for the on-going development of the project.

The way forward to setting up pastoral information services is for the providers to analyse the context, motivating factors, prevailing circumstances, information seeking behaviour and information use.

Analysis of context

If an information service provider is going to supply pastors with good pastoral information, there is need for them to first analyse the context of the need for information. There is a need to know the information gaps as well as the stakeholders. The findings of the study show that pastors had problems accessing relevant pastoral information. The analysis must identify information needs of pastors in every context. This will help to stay relevant in providing the information services. The analysis should identify gaps in information supply and the types of services that are required to support the effective delivery of pastoral information to pastors.

The analysis must focus on how pastors use ICTs to access and use pastoral information services. The literature review and data presented and analysed have shown that ICTs are growing in importance, globally. However, this study has shown that the utilisation of ICTs by pastors is very low, even though the pastors have ranked it highly as an information source. The assessment of the ICT requirements of pastors in Namibia must be made alongside the information seeking behaviour assessment. Their information seeking behaviour will influence or determine their use of ICT.

Analysis of motivating factors

There is a need to know what motivates the user to want to look for information. Wilson (1995) states that information services should not happen by chance. They must not be put together in a haphazard fashion; they must be planned and designed around the needs of the information user and his or her information seeking behaviour. More importantly, Wilson (1995) believes that if information providers fail to understand users' needs and the process of satisfying those needs, information services are bound to fail, as the users will ignore them.

Analysis of prevailing circumstances

There is need to know prevailing circumstances around the information users. Prevailing circumstances could be age, education, one's social role, available resources and their characteristics. There is need to have guidelines to assist the information service providers to manage the development of the pastoral information services, and to identify the resources and facilities necessary for such services. Specific implementation guidelines may include:
- Setting goals and objectives of the pastoral information service;
- Setting up support infrastructure; and

- Financing pastoral information services.

The successful implementation of a pastoral information service will depend on the availability of infrastructure and financial resources.

Analysis of information seeking behaviour

The analysis of pastors' information seeking behaviour helps to know whether they are passive or active information seekers. Passive information seekers wait to coincidentally get information while active information seekers intentionally pursue information. It also helps to find out what information sources are preferred by the pastors. This will also provide service providers with a way of learning from experiences, improving service delivery, planning and allocating resources and demonstrating findings as part of accountability to key stakeholders. The specific areas of focus should include:

- Information needs of pastors;
- Changes in information seeking behaviour of pastors;
- Factors affecting pastoral information services; and
- Level of ICT use in the delivery of pastoral information services.

It is important that the information seeking behaviour of pastors is reviewed periodically. This will help to improve the services and to create a databank of information for future research on the subject.

Analysis of information use

For the services not only to survive but also to thrive, there is need for information service providers to not only know what information is needed but also how and what it is used for. What is crucial is that in the end, pastors obtain comprehensive and reliable information at the right time. The process shown in Figure 1 below involves a series of steps. Although the diagram shows these steps as occurring in an orderly manner, they often overlap. Some of the stages may happen at the same time. However, understanding the process helps the information service providers to know how they can manage the services. The pastoral information service framework proposed above is graphically summarised in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Proposed framework for setting up pastoral information services
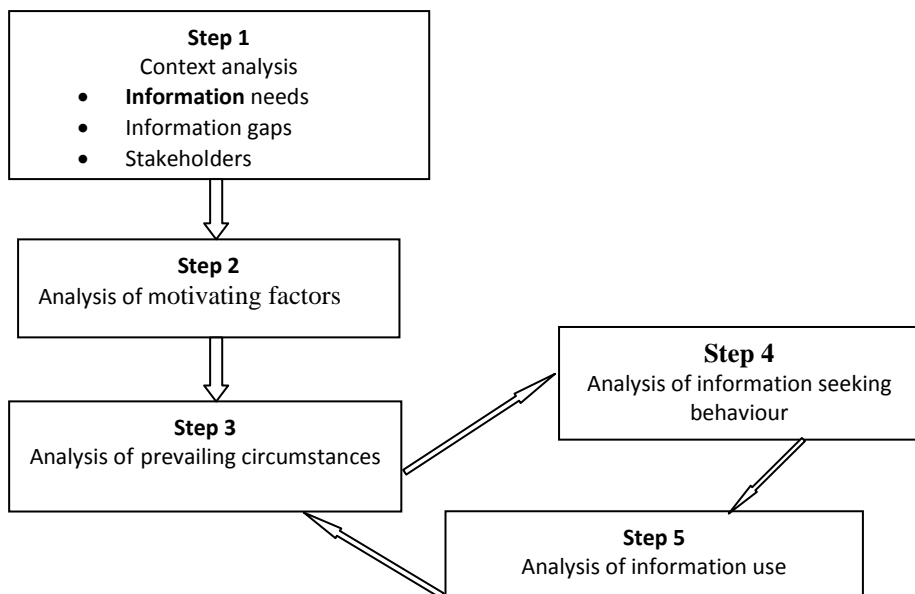
7. Conclusion

The provision of information services to pastors is one of the important areas that theological colleges and churches in Namibia should consider if pastors are to be successful in the execution of their pastoral duties. Sometimes pastors completely fail to execute their pastoral duties because of lack of information. However, the issue of accessibility of information should not be discussed in isolation. There are other issues that need to be considered; for example, training in the use of computers, costs and the repackaging of information. While information is important for pastoral duties, information service providers need to know the contexts in which the pastors are serving and their levels of education. Pastoral information service provision can be enhanced when all involved stakeholders including pastors, local churches, Council of Churches in Namibia (CCN), Pastors' Book Set, and theological colleges work together so that the services are well coordinated. With a coordinated approach, pastors can be constantly provided with the information and training necessary for accessing pastoral information.

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