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Information Needs and sources of Clergy: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract:

The purpose of this Systematic Literature Review is to find out the information needs and sources of Clergy, as explored in the empirical studies published from 1999 to June 2020. A comprehensive search process of three databases for studies of information behavior of clergy was employed in order to retrieve studies for this systematic review. Common themes that appeared from literature were synthesized into a discussion of information patterns. In addition to this, an analysis of study methods was carried out on all selected studies. Three roles in everyday life of the clergy as “Preacher”, “Caregiver” and “Administrator”; have identified and their information needs and sources have also been explored. Findings revealed that the clergy used print and non-print sources depending upon the nature of particular role they performed. Hence, this review also identified some literature gaps and suggested new areas for further research. This Systematic Literature Review significantly conducted to highlight the information needs and sources of Clergy. The findings may help to get better understanding of this specific group and may also beneficial for stakeholders in policy and decision making.

Keywords: Clergy, Clergy roles, Religious professionals, Information needs, Information sources, Information behavior

Introduction

There is a lot of information available today after the arrival of information communication technologies and internet. Unavailability of information has gone irrelevant. The new phenomenon about the awareness and access of the relevant information has occurred. Now it became a challenge to provide the needed information to the people to solve their particular information problems. Libraries have managed vast range of information resources and also built collections simultaneously to facilitate the clients. Whereas a significant growth in use of web, development of smart gadgets and accessibility of information resources

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made a great impact on both, the library as well as the user. Every individual or group of people has needed unique type of information through which they can fulfil their information needs. Therefore, it was felt needed to understand the information users in their context and as of their information environment. This necessity made a noticeable shift from product based to user and need based. The change from the study of product to the individual, as the locator and consumer of information, has received extraordinary consideration among information professionals and become a prominent area of library research. In this digital era user studies played a vital role to make capable, the information professionals for improvement their understanding about the user's need of information and its use. These studies of information seeking behaviors of users, provides a valued understanding and the outcomes lead's professionals, to improve and provide better services accordingly. Information seeking has been emerged significantly as an area of research in the field of library and information science. Many studies to explore the information seeking behavior of various populations have been seen in the literature .¹ This research area has to determine the information seeking behavior of different types of users in order to make possible that the right information must be available and accessible to the right people. Information seeking can be defined as a pertinent way of resolving issue, problem or an information need, with taking some certain steps to create a search as a process, carrying out and assessing the results. Information seeking actually an effort to obtain some information consciously to address a need or gap in our knowledge. In other words, this process of information seeking is to be carried out consciously when any one identifies the need for information to fill a gap in one's knowledge, and then makes an attempt to find information to fill that gap. Information seeking is a process of inquest in which people engage to acquire information purposefully to change their state of knowledge. Information behavior research can be traced from 1948 when the research papers on the information behavior of scientists and technologists were presented in the Royal Society Scientific Information Conference.² Ellis defined as "information seeking pattern will depend on the unique circumstances of the information seeking activities of the person concerned at that particular point in time".³ Wilson also described as "information behavior is meant those activities a person may engage in when identifying his or her own needs for information, searching for such information in anyway, and using or transferring that information".⁴ Several models have also been

established for mapping the process of information seeking. Kundu conducted a comparative study of nine information seeking models with qualitative data analysis and concludes that each model has a different but also an overlapping or similar approach to information seeking behavior research. Information necessities of several professional groups and their specific information search practices have gained a lot of attention through the last decade. These professional groups such as Educationists, Scientists, Engineers and Doctors etc. have been researched to explore their information requirements with an aim to provide them correct information so that, they can properly participate in the development of the society.⁵

A worthy professional group which has a very much influential role in individual's life as well as in society norms, is Clergy. Religion has a great significance to the billions of people worldwide. Religion dominates the people in the society as they hold different beliefs about their ways of life. As far as the information is concerned, these clergies have gathered information and disseminate it through their preaching's, sermons and other religious activities. They are making a big change not only in their personal lives, but also in the lives of their audience around the world. It seems to be clear that thousands and millions of clergies from different religions are engaged in their professional activities on daily basis. Unfortunately the society has not given proper responding attention to the Clergy. Similarly, information professionals have not paid much attention to understand their specific information needs. Recently, research on the information seeking behavior of the clergy is growing in the field of library and information science. These studies have investigated the information seeking behavior of the clergy and explored the different ways by which the clergy seek information of their need. Obviously every religion has its own norms and patterns and clergy have followed them strictly. These clergy needs information in order to adhere as per customs and practices of their respective religions and to provide authentic information to their followers. In the last decade, a number of studies about the information seeking of clergy have been seen in the literature with conflicting findings. In this situation, the overall picture is not clear, as well as which findings are most authentic and can be used as the baseline for policy decisions. So it seems to be quite needed that a comprehensive review of available literature should be done carefully. A systematic literature review is very suitable measure for the purpose. It is

pertinent to mention that there has not been any systematic literature review available on the information needs of clergy.

This systematic literature review aimed to provide a better understanding and identifying the common patterns in selection and use of resources of clergy in different religions. It will also assist the information professionals to get evidence based picture of the information needs of clergy worldwide. This systematic literature review will also provide us information that in which countries and which religions have been explored so far. It will also provide us a degree of interest of this topic among researchers. Collectively, these articles will tell us about the commonalities, patterns and the rolls that have been performed by the clergy in different religions.

Methods:

Systematic literature review has been emerged in the area of health sciences. Shortly it has been turned into a useful tool for evidence based medicine. The systematic literature review is suitable for analyzing and synthesizing a large number of studies. It became a need of professionals to get in-depth knowledge on a specific topic quickly and effectively. The progress of systematic literature review in areas other than health sciences is undeniable.⁶ “Systematic reviews differs from narrative type of literature reviews. Narrative review provides only a summary and overview of the content available on a particular topic, while a systematic review is more narrowly focused and seeks to assemble, critically appraise or evaluate and synthesize the results of primary studies in an integrative approach”.⁷ In this systematic literature review, the researcher tried to provide an impartial synthesis with interpretations of the outcomes in an unbiased and balanced approach. Researcher also attempted to identify, select and evaluate the empirical studies to present a complete and reliable portrait of the topic under consideration. Steps involved in the production of a systematic literature review are question formulation, searching for studies, inclusion and exclusion criteria, data extractions, data analysis and presentation.⁸

Research Questions:

The initial step is to articulate the research questions; the reviewer is making an attempt to address these questions in this systematic literature review.

RQ1. What are the reasons for which the clergy need’s information?

RQ2. What sources do they have use to acquire needed information?

Data Collection:

Search Strategy

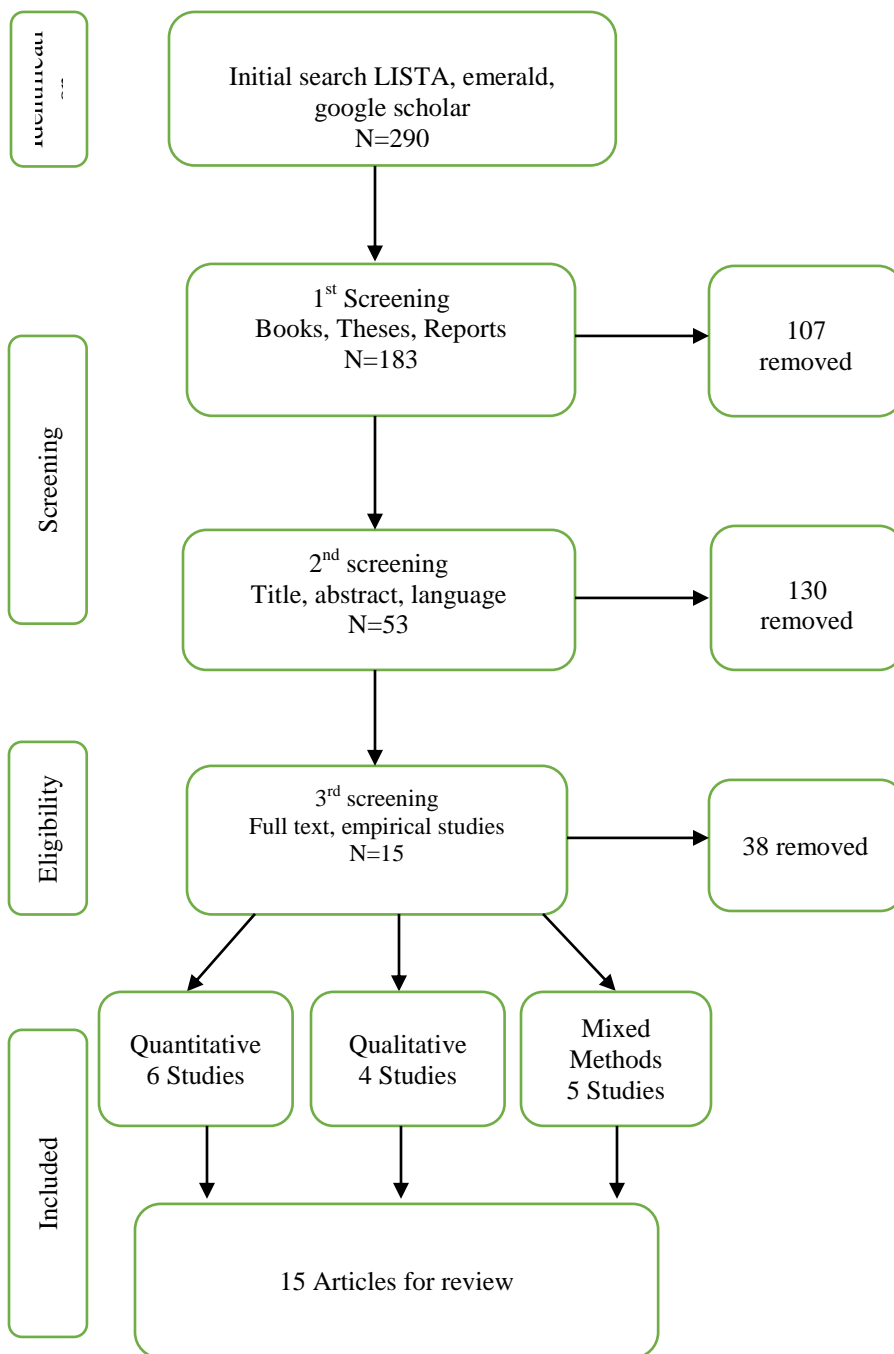
Studies for review were sourced from three databases including Library Information Science and Technology Abstracts (LISTA), Emerald publishing and Google Scholar. A comprehensive search strategy was defined and the terms used for the purpose were “information seeking behavior”, “information practices”, “information needs and seeking”, “information behavior” AND “clergy”, “rabbi”, “priest”, “minister”, “imam”, chaplain”, “ulama”, “religious professionals”. Initially these search terms were employed with advanced search (boolean operator) option on the LISTA. Almost similar results returned in most cases. As a result, a decision was made to use all relevant articles that were retrieved, regardless of time of publication. Snowball technique (references of the studies) was also applied on retrieved studies to get more relevant literature. Same search strategy was used in remaining two databases. Consequently, a total of 290 studies was retrieved.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria:

Studies having terms information seeking, information behavior, information needs along with clergy and religious professionals, either mentioned in title or subject or used within abstract or as keyword were identified. Articles from peer reviewed journals of English language, published till June 2020 with full text availability, were included in this review. Quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods studies were considered as per criteria. Studies focused on clergy as population and explored their sermon preparation and everyday life needs was main inclusion criteria of the review.

Collected material was recorded in MS Excel sheet. Different queries were applied to get relevant data. Studies published in other than English language, book chapters, editorials, conference proceedings, duplication, dissertations, reports and review of articles were excluded. Every single article was checked against inclusion and exclusion criteria. As a result, 15 articles were meet all the criteria. A representing diagram of literature search and steps of review can be seen in Fig.1.

Figure 1. Literature search and review process



Selection of relevant studies and data extraction:

The finalized fifteen full text articles were evaluated. The characteristics of the selection can be seen in table. These studies were also classified by type of research design used. After appraising the selected studies reviewer extracted data comprised author and year of publication, country, research methods, instrument of data collection, population and sample with response rate, reasons of information needed, source of information and conclusion of the study of each selected article. This extracted data was further verified and examined for review purpose.

Findings:

The findings of selected studies have been presented in the table 1. This table also described the characteristics and results based on research questions of this review. The first research question considered that, what are the reasons for which the clergy need's information? While the second research question scanned, what sources do they have use to acquire needed information?

Characteristics and explanation of selected studies:

The identified fifteen relevant articles for this systematic literature review have evaluated according to the defined inclusion and exclusion criteria. These articles were published in peer reviewed journals up till June 2020.

Table 1. Representation of selected studies

Author/ Year	Country	Research Method	Instrument	Population/ Sample/ Response	Reason of informa tion needed	Information sources to perform roles	Conclusion
Quantitative Studies							
Hickey, K. A. 2017	USA	Survey	Questionnaire	Catholic Women 124/88 (71%)	Discernment Vocation	-Print and digital material -Speaking with spiritual directors -Friends of their own vocation	1. They used print and digital sources for their information needs. 2. Data also highlighted the usefulness of personal contacts with their community.
Mansour, E.A.H. 2015	Kuwait	Survey	Questionnaire	Mosque Speech Makers (Islamic Clergy) 795/561 (70.6%)	Sermon Speech Religious lecture	-Print sources. -Biographies, -Books, -Encyclopedias -Mass media	1. They used both old (traditional) and new (non-traditional) sources, focused more on old-fashioned sources such as biographies and books. 2. All participants determined that the most important sources were books, especially the Holy Qur'an and Hadith (100%), followed by biographies (99.1%) of family and companions of the prophet Muhammad (PBUH), media (97.3%), the web (90%), encyclopedias (86.8%) and references (85.1%)
					Current events	-Web pages -Mob Apps -Databases	
Saleh, A.G. et al. 2011	Nigeria	Survey	Questionnaire	Ulama (Muslim Clergy) 31/31 (100%)	Preaching Role (Friday Khutba)	Formal Sources -Quran -Hadith -Books on Fiqh -Books on Tafsir -Personal Library	1. The participants identified preaching, counseling and administration as the major work roles for which they use information. 2. The Ulama generally prefer formal sources. Personal library is found to be the most widely used channel for gathering information. Informal sources such as friends, family members, other Alim were also consulted as sources of information.
					Counseling role (marriage and naming ceremonies, Funeral administrative)	Informal Sources -Friends -Family -Other Alim	

Saleh, A.G. et al. 2012	Nigeria	Survey	Questionnaire	Ulama (Muslim Clergy) 284/281	role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Quran -Hadith -Books on Tafsir -Journals -Library 	<p>1. Findings from the study shown a remarkable understanding of the various sources of information which includes library, internet and informal channels the Ulama used.</p> <p>2. They also indicated sound knowledge of information resources such as books, journals, Audio visuals, internet and databases while Quran and Hadith were the most popular and preferred among Ulama.</p>
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Counseling role (marriage and naming ceremonies, Funeral) Administrative role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Databases -Audio Visuals -Internet -Colleague- -Friends -Relatives -Committee of Ulama 	
Saleh, A.G. et al. 2013	Nigeria	Survey	Questionnaire	Ulama (Muslim Clergy) 284/281	Preaching role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Quran -Books of Tafsir -Hadith -Journals 	<p>1. Although the study identified two roles preaching and counseling, performed by the Ulama.</p> <p>2. Printed materials were preferred to non-print or electronic resources. Books, particularly the scriptures Qur'an, Hadith and other religious publications was the core choice for information among all respondents.</p> <p>3. Internet, audiovisuals, personal libraries and interpersonal channels like colleagues, council of Ulama, friends and relatives were highly regarded and used as main sources of information by the Ulama when carrying out their counseling role.</p>
					Counseling role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Databases -Audio Visuals -Personal, Public and institutional libraries -Council of ulama -Colleagues -Friends -Relatives 	
Smith, K. L. et al. 2008	USA	Survey	Questionnaire	Parish ministry 503/38.40%	Sermon preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Web sites -Email -Subscription of online newspapers 	<p>1. The resources identified by participants were the best and high quality resources for parish ministry available on the Internet.</p> <p>2. It was clearly mentioned that a large number of clergy were used these electronic resources and these resources also became a</p>
					Denominational information/		

							regular part of their day-to-day ministry.
Qualitative Studies							
Dankasa, J. 2015	Nigeria	Interview	Interview	Catholic clergy 15/100%	Teaching of the Church Pastoral Problems	-Circle of clergy -Expert advice -Insider advice -Fellow Priests.	1. The findings showed that the Catholic clergy in Northern Nigeria were not likely to cross boundaries of their small worlds to seek information about their ministry. 2. They prefer to seek such information within their circle of clergy.
					Administration Politics/ Health issues/ Security / To Buy any product	-Other than clergy -People -Internet	
Lambert, J.D. 2010	USA	Interview	Interview	Baptist ministers 31/10	Preacher	Formal channels -Bible -Bible commentaries -Bible concordances -Bible dictionaries -Published sermon collections -Online Bible study tools -Sermon illustration sites -Personal libraries	1. This study revealed that ministers see their primary role as preacher. 2. Mostly ministers sought information to prepare sermons, they used formal channels. 3. They used informal channels for administrative and other roles.
					Giving funeral Administrator (Hiring church staff Building project) Presiding wedding Ministring to sick	Informal Channels -Personal contacts	
Michels, D.H. 2010	Canada	Observation Interview	Observation Interview	Church Minister 1/1	Sermon preparation	-Bible -Print -Personal library	1. Participants emphasized formal sources in sermon preparation, such as the Bible and reference tools. 2. They relied on their own library but supplemented this with online sources which they could access
					Personal development	-Youtube -Web2.0 applications	

					(facebook, twitter) -Contact with Colleagues & friends	from home. 3. The use of print sources still dominated as a source of references.
Roland, D. 2012	USA	Interview	Interview	Protestant Clergy 5/100%	Theological Congregational -Books for sermon preparation task. -Notes for each sermon included bulleted comments and quotations	1. The findings indicated that clergy operated within a closed information system at the intersection of their preaching role and their congregational world. 2. In other words, clergy members do not go outside of their congregational worlds in search of information as far as congregational world information relates to their preaching role.
Mixed Methods Studies						
Dankasa, J. 2016	Nigeria	Interview Survey	Interview Questionnaire	Catholic Clergy Interview=15/ Survey=109/122 Interview=100%	Church Teaching Sermons Pastoral Problems	-Contact with experts for Spiritual matters and to resolve the personal and community issues.
					Administration/Health/Politics/Sports/Liesure/Entertainment/Products to buy	-Internet
Dankasa, J. 2016	Nigeria	Interview/ Survey	Interview/ Questionnaire	Catholic Clergy Interview=15/15 100% Survey=109/122	Sermons Teachings of the Church	-Printed Books -Documents -Personal Libraries
					Health/Politics/Sports/	-Fellow clergy -Internet
<p>1. The findings showed that clergy, everyday life information needs comprised both work and non-work and cannot be easily separated.</p> <p>2. Therefore, essential type of information needed was treated as an everyday life information need that belonged to both work and non-work domains because they were overlapped.</p> <p>1. This study found that this group of clergymen do not frequently use public/school libraries.</p> <p>2. This finding was not surprising they rely on Personal libraries and internet.</p> <p>3. This behavior was found to be the same among the clergy regardless of years of experience in the ministry or level of education attained.</p>						

				Liesure/ Entertain ment/ Internet/ TV/ Media/S ocial Media/ TV			
Lacovic, D. et al. 2017	Croatia	Survey/ Semi Structured Interview	Questionnaire/ Semi Structured Interview	Catholic priests Survey=1025/327 31.09% Interviews=25/25 100%	Pastoral work/ Sermon preparat ion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Catholic books -Religious web pages -Religious newspapers -Journals -Secular books -Secular web pages -Books from the other Christian denominations -Secular newspapers and journals 	<p>1. Results indicated that parish priests generally consulted religious sources on the Internet for liturgical and care-giving services.</p> <p>2. Secular web pages were preferably consulted by younger, middle-aged priests used web pages with religious topics.</p> <p>3. Majority of the respondents use computers in a pastoral work for making and processing documents and searching the Internet.</p>
				Caregivi ng (marriag e counseli ng)/Visi t sick believer s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -TV -Radio 		
Lacovic, D. et al. 2018	Croatia	Survey/ Semi Structured Interview	Questionnaire/ Semi Structured Interview	Catholic priests Survey=1025/327 31.09% Interviews=25/25 100%	Liturgy/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Religious literature -Rely own knowledge -Experience -Secular literature 	<p>1. A large number of respondents indicated that they pre dominantly use religious literature and also rely on their own knowledge and experience</p> <p>2. They also reported that for care-giving purposes they primarily rely on their own experience, contact their parish.</p> <p>3. They consulted both religious and secular literature for liturgical purposes and sermons they obtained required information in their parish library, or at the</p>
				Caregivi ng	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Own experience -Personal sources -Parishs -Other priests. 		

Wicks, D. A. 1999	Canada	Survey/ Structured interviews	Questionnaire and Structured Interviews	Pastoral Clergy Survey=989/378 = 38.2% Interviews=20/20 = 100%	Preaching	Formal Sources -Books -Other print sources -Personal Libraries	professional meetings. 1. The findings revealed that pastoral clergy tend to use different types of information sources while performing different roles in their work. 2. Formal sources were preferred when preparing to preach and informal when performing non-ceremonial caregiving duties as well as when making administrative decisions.
					Administrative Caregiving	Informal sources -Interpersonal sources	

Table 1 provided the analysis of selected studies in detail. First column presented the author name and annual distribution. This column showed that 2010, 2012, 2015, 2016 and 2017, were most productive years, two articles in each year were published, which was the maximum number of publication in one year. While, in the years 1999, 2008, 2011, 2013 and 2018 only one article was published. It was seen clearly, that the first article on information seeking behavior of clergy appeared in 1999. As a result, this column provided the details about information needs of clergy related research from last twenty-one years.

Second column illustrated the country affiliations of the first author and the research settings of the studies. Through this column, the scenario about information seeking of clergy could be seen worldwide. Six articles from Nigeria were published, while four articles from United States, Canada and Croatia published two articles followed by Kuwait with one article only. Consequently, with the strong evidences it was concluded that Nigeria was most productive country while United States of America stood second, Canada and Croatia got third and Kuwait ranked at last position. This analysis depicted that the researchers from only five countries worked on this topic with the clergy as population. Certainly this situation indicated the research gap.

Third column presented the used research methodology of these selected articles. Six studies used survey, three studies used interview, and one used interview along with observation, while five studies used mixed survey and interview (structured and semi structured) both, as their primary methodologies of data collection. Almost all research designs (quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods) with their popular data collection techniques were used. It was worth noting that all measures concerning with research

designs like population, sampling, response rate and results were taken properly as per the standards and norms of the research.

Fourth column contained the details of data collection instruments. Six studies used questionnaire, three studies used interview only and one study used interview along with observation while remaining five studies used both instruments questionnaire and interview simultaneously.

Fifth column described the population, sample and response. It is pertinent to mention that all articles described only two religions clergy's information needs i.e. Christianity and Islam. This column also indicated the research gap. Nearly all articles mentioned valid and detailed results that were justified through the literature. Furthermore, articles offered implications of the outcomes and suggested further research. Only two studies were with low response rate because they used online surveys, it was evident in the literature that low response rate with online surveys were accepted fairly.⁹ Studies, who used qualitative design were not mentioned whether informed consent or Institutional review board (IRB) approvals were obtained or not.

Sixth column analyzed the purpose of information seeking. In other words this column indicated the reasons for which the clergy needed information. This column also explained the events in the daily life of clergy. All studies were identified the reasons and also recognized the information sources they used.

Seventh column presented the sources that were used to fulfill their information needs. All fifteen studies were identified the clergy's information sources and their usage patterns. While the last column provided the conclusion of each study separately. In the light of the table which was consisted of eight columns, having quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods representations, it could be claimed that a holistic picture about the information needs and sources of clergy about their everyday life was being presented with evidences.

RQ1: What are the reasons for which the clergy need's information?

All fifteen articles were identified the information needs of clergy. The main focus in the sixth and seventh columns of this table was to illustrate the identified reasons and information sources respectively that the clergy needed in their everyday life. As mentioned earlier that last column highlighted the conclusion of every article separately.

During the evaluation it was found, that there were some certain reasons that were faced by the religious professionals in their everyday life and to meet them, they were needed information. The most prominent reason identified in all articles was preaching. Some other reasons were also identified, like counseling, caregiving, administration and personal

development as well. In fact these were the roles that were being performed by clergy in their everyday life.

It is worth mentioning that, every religion has its own terminology and culture, which could be representative of their clergy roles and their information needs in daily life. For better understanding and make some uniformity, the researcher categorized these reasons with some careful consideration, into three main roles of clergy. First role was as "preacher", which was related to the sermon speech, religious lecture, discernment, friday khutba, pastoral problems, church teachings, liturgy and congregation. Second role was as "caregiver", which covered the marriage ceremony, naming ceremony, and visit to sick believer, counselling, presiding wedding, nikah, funeral and inheritance. Third and the last role was as "administrator", which dealt with hiring of church staff, building project, security, current events (day to day need, sudden issues), personal development (education, health, sports, leisure, entertainment, product to buy, and politics). All these roles as religious leaders they performed with utmost responsibility and for which they were needed information.

Firstly the role as a "preacher" which was the basic role that clergy performed as a professional, was identified in all fifteen articles. As discussed earlier that every religion has its own vocabulary but the broader term "preacher", narrated all terms related to their basic role and its preparation as sermon speech, religious lecture, discernment, friday khutba, pastoral problems, church teachings, liturgy and congregation.

Secondly, as a "caregiver" role was identified in seven studies.¹⁰ As per the cultural values of different religions "caregiver" responsibilities were identified as the marriage counselling, naming a child, visit to sick believer, presiding a wedding ceremony, nikah, funeral and inheritance.

Thirdly nine studies identified the role as "administrator".¹¹ The identified role of clergy as an administrator needed decision making and dealt with hiring of church staff, building project, security, current events (day to day need, sudden issues), personal development (education, health, sports, leisure, entertainment, product to buy, and politics).

As a result after the thorough analysis of the selected studies, the answer of the first research question has been concluded as, the reasons of information needed by clergy were their roles, which they performed in their everyday lives.

RQ2: What sources do they have use to acquire needed information?

The second research question examined, what sources do the clergy used to meet their information needs? Seventh column in the table 1 described all sources in detail, which were used by clergy to perform their

roles. To answer the second research question, findings have been presented according to the roles of clergy as preacher, caregiver and administrator.

Identification of information sources:

It was found in the selected studies that the clergymen acquired information from different sources. These sources were different in nature. To maintain the uniformity and to provide an analysis with clarity, the researcher arranged these scattered sources thoughtfully, under three generic terms print, digital and fellows. The term print represented here religious books like Quran, Hadith, Bible, Commentaries, religious documents, other printed material like encyclopedias, dictionaries, journals, newspapers, notes and biographies. The term digital indicated internet (email), websites, online newspapers, databases, audio visual material, web 2.0 application (facebook, twitter, youtube) and mobile apps. Whereas, the fellows described fellow clergy, spiritual directors, committee of ulama, friends, family, and colleagues.

Information sources as “preacher”:

As the roles of clergy have been identified on the basis of available evidences from the selected studies. Findings also indicated that clergy have been inclined to use different information sources for accomplishing different roles in their everyday life. The table also described the information sources that have been used by these religious professionals to perform their basic responsibility as “preacher” excellently.

Print:

Majority of the articles twelve out of fifteen¹² identified that their population relied on print sources for sermon preparations. Information needed to perform as preacher is being seen as essential in nature to the clergy, so they can perform their responsibilities. These responsibilities included sermon speech, religious lecture, preaching and Friday Khutba, for this purpose information has been needed continuously to enhance the knowledge. These studies further highlighted that mostly clergymen preferred to acquire these books from their personal libraries, they do not use public or institutional libraries.

Digital:

Digital sources were used by participants in four articles as major source for organizing preaching lectures.¹³ Smith et al. was the only study indicated that the clergy rely only on digital sources. Different websites and online newspapers were identified as favorite sources on information.¹⁴

Fellows:

Only two studies were used fellows as their key source of information for preaching preparations.¹⁵ Fellow clergy, spiritual directors and fellow

priests were identified as reliable source of information for sermon preparations.

Information sources used as “caregiver”

Print

No study from selected articles identified any print source used by any population for caregiving purposes.

Digital

Three articles showed clearly, that digital means were used, as sources of information to meet caregiving requirements by clergy.¹⁶

Fellows

The clergymen in five studies were relied on their fellows to perform their caregiver responsibilities.¹⁷

As we know that a caregiver role is also an important responsibility of clergy. It will be worth mentioning here, that only eight articles were explored from the population about caregiver role of clergy.

Use of information sources as “administrator”:

Print

No evidence from selected articles was found in which print sources were used as information source to perform administrative role.

Digital

It was found during the analysis, only six articles identified digital sources, as dependable source of information for clergy to resolve administrative issues.¹⁸

Fellows

In five articles, fellows support and consultation proved to be a source of information through which clergy solved their administrative needs.

As an answer of second research question we can conclude on the basis of evidence that, the clergymen used different sources of information for their different needs. Their most basic need was to fulfill their role as a preacher and that was actually their main role. They used printed sources significantly for the purpose and consulted their personal libraries. While, caregiving and to perform day to day administrative affairs were their side responsibilities. They were dependent upon using digital contents and consulting their fellows, these were the information sources that clergy used.

Discussion:

This systematic literature review provided a detailed picture about the information needs and sources of clergy worldwide since 1999 to June 2020. Though the literature on this topic is very limited. This review also highlighted the religions and countries, in which the research has been done so far. Multiple research methods and different theoretical frameworks were

employed in these articles to understand the information needs and sources of clergy.

In relation to the first research question, what are the reasons for which the clergy need's information? The results revealed that clergy performed different roles in their day to day life. After careful deliberation three roles were recognized for the clergy in this review, by the researcher. These roles were actually the reasons behind information needs. These roles were as preacher, caregiver and administrator (details cited above), to satisfying these roles, the clergy pursued to seek information. It can be concluded that the nature of their needed information strongly depends upon the role they performed.

As far as the second research question is concerned that, what sources they used to acquire needed information? It was found when the clergy needed information for sermon preparations, they tend to seek information through authentic and reliable sources. They were well aware of the high expectations of their believers. It was also perceived evidently that, they relied strongly on print sources (their sacred books, details cited above), those were available in their personal libraries. However, when they performed their remaining roles as caregiver and administrator, they do not consult print sources entirely. Moreover, when they served as caregiver and administrator, they consulted digital and fellows as sources simultaneously.

Religion is a very solid institution. It is an established fact that about eight billion people are following different religions worldwide. It is also known to us that a large number of clergy are involved in this religious profession of guidance and training of the people. Unfortunately, only few studies are available in the literature, who investigated the information needs and sources of clergy. The studies found in the literature, focused only on Christian and Islamic clergy. Although this literature has been appeared from five countries i.e. Canada, Croatia, Kuwait, Nigeria and USA. This research gap has already identified in this review earlier, there is a dire need of further exploration, from different religions and from different research settings of the world. Furthermore, it was also felt that this review will help and enable information professionals to understand the information needs and sources of clergy, so they can serve better to this sacred professional group.

Delimitations:

Focus on English language articles is the only delimitation of this systematic literature review.

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