

Information Needs of the Nomadic Communities in Improving their Livelihood in Garissa County

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Abstract

Purpose: Increasing access to information and knowledge for nomadic communities supports sustainable development and improves the community's livelihood while establishing active, responsible, and inclusive institutions at all levels. However, nomadic communities in arid and semi-arid lands have restricted access to information due to their geographical, economic, and social marginalization. The study aimed to determine the information needs of the nomadic communities in improving their livelihood in Garissa County.

Methodology: The study is anchored by the Wilson model with the use of a descriptive survey research design. The target population was 377, including library users, heads of public libraries, and sub-county officers. The library users were sampled using multistage cluster sampling. The six educational officers and the three heads of libraries were chosen by purposeful sampling. Data were collected using questionnaires and interview schedules, which were validated and tested for reliability through per-testing in Tana River County. SPSS version 26 was used for data analysis and descriptive statistics was used to interpret the findings.

Results: The findings revealed that nomadic communities in Garissa County have distinct and pressing information needs to enhance their livelihoods. Sustainable farming practices, effective livestock management, and educational opportunities tailored to the nomadic lifestyle were identified as key areas of interest. Public libraries, by providing tailored resources and programs, have addressed these needs to some extent.

Conclusion: There is a need for regular information needs assessments to identify and address the specific information requirements of nomadic communities. Furthermore, public libraries should collaborate with community leaders to ensure that their collections and services meet the practical and cultural needs of the nomadic community, fostering greater engagement and livelihood improvement.

Keywords: *Information, Nomadic Communities, Livelihood, Information Needs, Garissa County*

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1.0 Introduction

Livelihood issues have a direct impact on the achievement of the nomadic community and are considered to be a socio-economic priority where every community needs to find the right information resources to address and maintain the continuous improvement in economy,

education, security, health, and other forms of livelihood. Due to the nature of their lifestyle nomadic community is characterized by constant mobility which excludes them from the most essential livelihood services such as education, crop farming, and medical welfare services (Gammino et al., 2020). According to Mia (2020), the non-existence of access to the right information by the nomadic communities is depriving them of access to necessities of life and exposing them to poverty. In Australia for instance, public libraries have an equal opportunity approach that is similar to the United States of America, to place a social worker in the library to assist disadvantaged patrons who are homeless to access livelihood skills in areas of health care, education, and substance abuse control (Garner et. al.2021).

Public libraries have a central role to play in their respective counties, and their main function is to provide factual information to communities to enhance their socioeconomic development. The nomadic communities in arid and semi-arid lands have restricted access to information due to their geographical, economic, and social marginalization. The irony of the situation in nomadic communities in Kenya is that although information is more available globally, today than in any other time of human history, the public libraries are located in towns and most of them are inaccessible by nomadic communities in Kenya and at present it appears that most public libraries have either poorly staff professional and inadequate stock which cannot meet the needs of the pastoral community that are already affected by the nature of the mobility. The camel library that was launched in 1996 to serve the pastoral community in Garissa County was withdrawn due to lack of funding. A number of scholars such as Nyariki and Amwata (2019), Mia (2020), Jamali (2019), and Nyambura (2020) have examined different strategies to improve the livelihood of marginalized communities such as nomadic communities. However, they did not specifically explore information access factors for improving the livelihood existence of the community, a gap that this study addressed. The study aimed to determine the information needs of the nomadic communities in improving their livelihood in Garissa County.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical review

The inclusion of *Wilson* model/Theory in the study is justified by its comprehensive examination of all aspects of nomadic communities' information demands, including information sources and services, as well as the utilization of public libraries in Garissa County. Wilson's (1999) theory is particularly useful since it provides a concise and understandable illustration of the connection between information retrieval, information seeking, and user behaviour. Wilson's thesis is crucial to comprehending consumers' information behaviour, their needs and services, and how to satisfy them (Kumar & Tholkappian 2013).

A person's desire to choose and obtain knowledge that fulfills a conscious or unconscious need is referred to as an information need. Public libraries are those that get funding from state and local governments through taxation and law. As a result, it is accessible and free for everyone, irrespective of status, gender, age, or religion (Ndungu & Otike, 2018). According to Mose (2018), the primary purpose of a public library is to serve the general public with information services, irrespective of age, gender, position, or occupation, and these services ought to be provided for free or at a minimal cost. According to Mohamed (2019), the main purpose of public libraries is to serve the broader public, which is the entire community. Public libraries have traditionally been seen as knowledge institutions since they offer open places for research and information and are available to all societal segments, regardless of gender, age, or

ethnicity, claim Kamau and Owano (2018). Individuals and societies both benefit from the use of public libraries.

Sime et al. (2022) describe the need of the library community for information provisions as dynamic and includes; food and nutrition, education, business, medical care, and social welfare among other needs. Public libraries form a strong pillar to serve all the needs of the community by providing the right facilities and resources to identify both the general and specific priority needs of the people. To ensure rural communities are integrated into socio-economic development, they must be fully aware of the kind of information that can help them support the right decision to improve their lives.

Globally, public libraries increasingly find information needs as a priority for all library communities and marginalized users such as nomadic people to improve their welfare by accessing information that is relevant to their livelihood. In China, a study on the roles of public libraries in improving socio-economic development largely recommends identifying the information needs of the community through maximizing the use of information and communication technology and essential skills that improve access to information (Chinapah & Odero, 2016). The study further recommends that there should be a more realistic approach to help the rural community access information services by improving its informal structure.

In Africa, every sector is making concerted efforts to improve its socio-economic gain as information becomes an essential ingredient to every significant development of livelihood achievement. Although there is an upsurge of information in the world, Africa as a continent is dragging behind as the access to information is still poor as the rural dwellers are unable to determine their information needs. The African community living in rural villages is related to oral tradition and is most affected by inadequate access to information. To have a developed information hub in Africa, there must be a structure that will constantly assist in identifying the needs of marginalized communities. The research highlights that public libraries have been supportive of the community and can still provide or play a significant role in assisting the communities in the rural setup (Ogbonna, 2020). Strategies That Public Libraries Use to Build Communities readings, poetry slams, and classes; digital literacy and computer skills training; and early childhood education through story time and cultural programming for young children.

In Kenya, due to the nature of the lifestyle of nomadic communities living in Kenya, the community continues to remain dormant to exploit the economic gain of information access despite the government putting up several public libraries in major counties such as those on Arid & Semi-Arid land, the noticeable livelihood activities where libraries have provided support include access to information to eradicate poverty, security and other livelihood supports. Benson et al. (2017) highlighted that in developing nations like Nigeria and Kenya, public libraries should find and assist significant functions that assist communities who are experiencing poverty to survive these social problems by disseminating relevant information materials that support the needed information in the most appropriate need.

A case study on the functions of public libraries in promoting literacy (Otieno, 2016). The study was based in Narok, Kenya on establishing the measures used by public libraries in supporting literacy levels in the whole nation. It investigated the innovative strategies like storytelling sessions would help the pastoralist community improve the level of literacy despite the socio-economic challenges. The study reveals that public libraries in pastoralist-dominated areas are placed to support the community in accessing the relevant information to meet their diverse needs. The public libraries being one of the socio-economic catalysts would be the best

driving force to steer the community out of the challenges by exposing them to a wide range of resources and facilities that are available to meet the needs of the oral community.

Nomadic communities' way of life is complex, influenced by their distinct way of life, movement, and cultural customs. Herding livestock is the main source of income for many nomadic communities. They look for feeding areas by moving their herds across wide stretches of terrain. Their communities depend on the sale of meat, milk, and other animal products. Artisan crafts including weaving, ceramics, and leather working are frequently practiced by nomads (Shekari et al., 2022). Their income is derived from these skills, which are inherited through the generations. Nomads engage in direct exchanges of products and services with nearby communities through barter commerce. They can purchase needs through this method without having to use official money (Shekari et al., 2022).

Public libraries are essential to improving nomadic populations' standard of living. Libraries can be effective allies in tackling the particular issues faced by these nomadic and frequently stigmatized communities. Libraries support nomadic populations in a multitude of ways the development of mobile library services that go to nomadic communities in their current location (Qayyum et al., 2020). These mobile libraries provide books, educational resources, and information to people in various places. Language instruction, literacy initiatives, and educational materials are all provided by public libraries. They provide nomadic people the tools they need to engage more completely in society by fostering reading and numeracy abilities through literacy programs. Rich cultural traditions are found in nomadic societies (Scott, 2011). Digital literacy skills can be taught in libraries as technology becomes more widely used. Nomads can acquire the skills necessary to operate smartphones, access the internet, and communicate efficiently.

3.0 Methodology

The research design for this study was a descriptive survey, the study was carried out in Garissa County Kenya National Library services which comprised of Mbalambala and Masalani. The total target population were 4204 comprising library users, the head of libraries, and educational officers. The sample size was 377 composed of 365 library users, 3 heads of libraries, and 6 sub-county officers. The study adopted a multistage sampling technique. Self-administered questionnaires were used in this study. Questionnaires consisted of mainly closed-ended items on a five-point Likert Scale ranging from (1 -5). Data was collected from librarians and sub-county education officers using interview schedules. Pilot study was conducted at Tana River County Public Library which has similar services to Garissa Public Library. Data was analyzed using SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistics was used to interpret the findings. Ethical considerations included seeking consent of the respective organizations and individual participants before data collection. Further confidentiality, data integrity, and adopting APA 7th edition was considered.

4.0 Results and Discussion

The response rate for the study was 92.04%, with 347 out of 377 distributed questionnaires returned and usable. This high response rate demonstrates strong respondent engagement, enhancing the reliability and validity of the study findings, and providing a solid basis for drawing meaningful conclusions and recommendations from the collected data.

4.1 Information needs of the nomadic communities in improving their livelihood

Table 1 reveals the information needs of nomadic communities regarding public library services.

Table 1: Information needs of the nomadic communities in improving their livelihood

	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std. Deviation
Library avails information materials for my needs	66	49	20	46	166	3.5677	1.62278
The library within my sub-county provides information on food and nutrition.	28	84	44	54	137	3.5418	1.41844
Library within the sub-county provides information on personal educational needs.	31	90	37	50	139	3.5072	1.45325
The library offers Information on animal health, market prices, and drought-resistant crops.	31	83	20	50	163	3.6657	1.47740
Library within my sub-county provides information on a business.	39	75	29	42	162	3.6138	1.51128
Public library users can get a variety of medical information	82	57	12	30	166	3.4063	1.71840
I'm able to access social welfare information.	31	38	36	29	213	4.0231	1.40171
The nomad's need is to get information on locating water sources, water purification methods, and sanitation practices.	28	96	30	47	146	3.5389	1.46068
Library provides information awareness about hygiene, waste disposal, and water conservation is crucial.	44	101	7	54	141	3.4236	1.55136
Library provides information about security threats, conflict resolution mechanisms, and legal rights is essential.	39	75	29	42	162	3.6138	1.51128
Library provides information on how community-based approaches to conflict prevention and resolution can be effective.	50	65	12	62	158	3.6138	1.54719

Respondents rated the availability of information materials at the library with a mean score of 3.57, indicating moderate satisfaction. Access to food and nutrition information scored 3.54, suggesting this service is generally useful. Educational information was rated slightly lower at 3.51, while information on animal health, market prices, and drought-resistant crops received a higher mean score of 3.67, reflecting strong approval. Business information and social welfare services were also well-rated, with mean scores of 3.61 and 4.02, respectively, showing these areas are highly valued. In contrast, medical information had a lower mean score of 3.41, with greater variability in user experiences. The findings from the study corroborate this view by showing that while some areas such as business information and social welfare are highly valued, others, like medical information, still require improvement. This is consistent with Mwaniki's (2022) assertion that library patrons have dynamic needs, necessitating diverse and evolving services.

However, the lower satisfaction scores for medical information and hygiene awareness indicate areas where improvements are needed, aligning with findings from Vitak (2018) and Bello & Salawu (2020) about the necessity for libraries to adapt to user needs continually.

Sub-county educators were interviewed to state how library users' information needs are met based on the following areas: Food and Nutrition, can be met by books and journals that have information that contains healthy eating habits

Provide books and resources to school children that have topics on food and nutrition

Avail accredited textbooks with pictures that display different categories of food and nutrition. Attends events and functions on food education organized by a library in partnership with organizations.

Education: Provide training centers that empower the community on issues of FGM, drug abuse, early marriage, and farming

Provide books to the teachers to guide the learners who cannot access books and materials due to the cost of purchase.

4.2 Livelihood of Nomadic People

The study sought to evaluate the impact of various library services on the livelihoods of pastoralists in Garissa County.

Table 2: Livelihood of Nomadic People

	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std. Deviation
Libraries provide access to information on livestock management, health, market trends, and sustainable practices.	59	74	48	8	158	3.3804	1.61262
By accessing books, journals, and digital resources, pastoralists can make informed decisions about their herds and livelihoods	44	64	38	8	193	3.6974	1.56850
These services reach remote areas, ensuring that even those far from fixed library buildings can benefit from reading materials.	53	51	42	12	189	3.6715	1.58984
Adaptability is key as pastoralists' movement patterns change mobile libraries pivot with these shifts, providing relevant resources	46	88	45	0	168	3.4496	1.58922
Libraries offer literacy programs, vocational training, and digital literacy.	36	79	61	12	159	3.5159	1.50016
Empowered individuals contribute to stronger communities and sustainable livelihood	38	109	48	4	148	3.3314	1.53842
Libraries facilitate access to market information market interaction helps pastoralists sell their livestock effectively.	48	86	54	8	151	3.3689	1.56070
Libraries can promote alternative livelihoods, reducing dependence solely on animals	58	76	33	12	168	3.4496	1.63229
Libraries contribute to the overall well-being of pastoralist communities	45	75	54	12	161	3.4870	1.54760
The pastoralists through the library can get resilience through knowledge sharing, disaster preparedness, and collective action	38	98	53	12	146	3.3746	1.51800

Table 2 tabulates that, Libraries providing access to information on livestock management, health, market trends, and sustainable practices received a mean score of 3.38 with a standard deviation of 1.61, indicating a moderate level of effectiveness in supporting pastoralists. Access to books, journals, and digital resources for informed decision-making about herds and livelihoods had a mean score of 3.70 with a standard deviation of 1.57, suggesting a positive impact on pastoralists' decision-making processes. Services that reach remote areas, ensuring access to reading materials even in distant locations, had a mean score of 3.67 with a standard deviation of 1.59. This demonstrates that these services are somewhat effective in extending

library benefits to less accessible areas. Adaptability of mobile libraries to pastoralists' movement patterns had a mean score of 3.45 with a standard deviation of 1.59, showing that while adaptability is important, its effectiveness varies as supported by Scott (2011) mobile libraries provide books, educational resources, and information to people in various places. Language instruction, literacy initiatives, and educational materials are all provided by public libraries. They provide nomadic people the tools they need to engage more completely in society by fostering reading and numeracy abilities through literacy programs. Rich cultural traditions are found in nomadic societies.

Libraries offering literacy programs, vocational training, and digital literacy had a mean score of 3.52 with a standard deviation of 1.50, reflecting moderate effectiveness in enhancing skills and knowledge. The contribution of libraries to stronger communities and sustainable livelihoods had a mean score of 3.33 with a standard deviation of 1.54, indicating a moderate to low perceived impact on community strength. Libraries facilitating access to market information to help pastoralists sell livestock effectively had a mean score of 3.37 with a standard deviation of 1.56, showing modest effectiveness. The promotion of alternative livelihoods to reduce dependency on animals received a mean score of 3.45 with a standard deviation of 1.63, indicating a similar level of effectiveness in fostering alternative income sources. Libraries contributing to the overall well-being of pastoralist communities scored 3.49 with a standard deviation of 1.55, reflecting a moderate positive impact. The ability of libraries to build resilience through knowledge sharing, disaster preparedness, and collective action had a mean score of 3.37 with a standard deviation of 1.52, showing a moderate level of effectiveness in enhancing community resilience. The majority of respondents indicated that libraries play a crucial role in providing valuable information and resources to pastoralist communities, with varying levels of effectiveness depending on the specific service or strategy employed. This is supported by studies carried out by Oskar et al. (2022) stating that digital literacy skills can be taught in libraries as technology becomes more widely used. Nomads can acquire the skills necessary to operate smartphones, access the internet, and communicate efficiently. For communities of nomads, libraries provide inclusive, secure environments. They can hold workshops, cultural events, and community meetings.

Library heads interviewed had the following to say

Pastoralism: Libraries provide training that helps pastoralists acquire skills in managing livestock, marketing, education, and security. Resilience on drought to ensure proper maintenance of the environment.

Farming: Provide information on farming skills and improve farming production

Ensure the nomadic communities ensure that they diversify their livelihood.

County educators interviewed had the following to say

Pastoralism: Providing information to the community in decision-making and providing support in schools that exist far from the library facilities.

Link between library and information in areas of livelihood. Providing training that helps pastoralists acquire skills in managing livestock, marketing, education, and security.

Farming: Provide information on farming skills and improve farming production. Ensure the nomadic communities ensure that they diversify their livelihood.

The responses from the library heads and educational officers are corroborated by (Qayyum et al., 2020) who state that libraries are effective allies in tackling the particular issues faced by these nomadic and frequently stigmatized communities. Libraries support nomadic populations

in a multitude of ways the development of mobile library services that go to nomadic communities in their current location.

4.3 Regression Analysis

As shown in Table 3 below, the study sought to assess the effectiveness of various predictors in explaining the improvements in pastoralists' livelihoods due to public library services in Garissa County.

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics R Square Change	F Change	df1
1	.932 ^a	.869	.867		4.40216	.869	566.687	4

a. Predictors: (Constant), Information needs

Table 3 presents the model summary, which includes several key statistics for evaluating the model's performance. The model's R-value is 0.932, indicating a strong positive correlation between the predictors and the outcome variable. The R Square value of 0.869 suggests that approximately 86.9% of the variability in the improvements in livelihood can be explained by the predictors included in the model. The R Square Change is 0.869, which shows the proportion of variance explained by the addition of predictors in the model.

ANOVA

Table 4: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	43927.370	4	10981.842	566.687	.000 ^b
	Residual	6627.621	342	19.379		
	Total	50554.991	346			

a. Dependent Variable: Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Information needs

Table 4 presents the ANOVA results for evaluating the regression model used to examine factors influencing performance related to public library services in Garissa County. This indicates the amount of variation in the dependent variable (performance) explained by the predictors in the model. The F statistic is 566.687, and the Sig. value is 0.000, which is statistically significant. This suggests that the model as a whole is a good fit for the data and the predictors collectively have a significant impact on performance. The ANOVA results confirm that the regression model is statistically significant and effectively explains the variance in performance due to the predictors related to public library services.

Coefficients

Based on the regression analysis, the coefficients in Table 5 show the impact of various predictors on performance related to public library services.

Table 5: Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	5.435	1.336		4.067	.000
Information needs	.075	.048	.065	1.553	.121

The constant has a significant value of 5.435 with a standard error of 1.336, a t-value of 4.067, and a significance level (p-value) of 0.000. This indicates that when all predictors are zero, the baseline performance level is 5.435, and this is statistically significant. The B coefficient is 0.075 with a standard error of 0.048, resulting in a t-value of 1.553 and a p-value of 0.121. This predictor is not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$).

5.0 Conclusion

The study concluded that the nomadic communities in Garissa County have specific and pressing information needs that are critical to their livelihoods. These needs revolve around sustainable farming practices, effective livestock management, and educational opportunities that are compatible with their nomadic lifestyle. Public libraries have been instrumental in addressing these needs by providing access to relevant and practical information. However, the study also identified a gap in fully meeting the unique requirements of these communities, underscoring the importance of continuous assessment and adaptation to their evolving needs.

6.0 Recommendations

To better meet the information needs of the nomadic communities, it is recommended that public libraries conduct regular needs assessments to stay informed about the evolving requirements of these communities. Public should focus on providing more targeted information, particularly in areas like sustainable farming practices and livestock management, which are critical to the livelihoods of the nomadic population.

Future research could explore how consistent access to information and educational resources provided by public libraries influences the economic resilience and social mobility of nomadic populations over time.

The study contributes to new information that could be utilized by public libraries to improve the livelihood of nomadic communities through provision of information access. Its finding is useful to the nomadic communities to get opportunities to access various sources of information that are useful to their livelihood development.

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