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**INFORMATION NEEDS AND SEEKING BEHAVIOUR OF ILLEGAL OIL BUNKERS
IN IMIRINGI TOWN OF BAYELSA STATE, NIGERIA**

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Abstract

This study focused on the information needs and seeking behavior of Illegal oil bunkers in Imiringi Town of Bayelsa state. Three research questions were formulated to guide the study. and was carried out using 150 questionnaires in order to ascertain the information needs and information seeking behavior of Illegal oil bunkers. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. Frequencies and percentages were used to analyze the data. The result showed that the Illegal oil bunkers do not have access to adequate information because the libraries as well as the local government, who this responsibility rests on, have been inefficient. Recommendations such as; organizing adult education programmes, etc, to educate the Illegal oil bunkers were made to ameliorate the situation.

Keywords: Information, Information needs, Seeking Behaviour, Illegal Oil Bunkers

Introduction

Nigeria is not only enormously endowed, but also rich in both human and natural resources; a vast arable hinterland suitable for variety of large scale agricultural production and solid minerals stash in commercial quantities in different parts of the country. Nigeria was beforehand the fifth-biggest oil-producing country in the world, but at present, is the thirteenth biggest because of various mechanical calamities that continue disturbing its production combined with the worldwide reduction of oil and gas costs since the third quarter of 2014 (Albert, Amaratunga & Haigh, 2019). It is no longer a debate that Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa and possibly the richest in the continent (Paki & Ebienu, 2011). The surplus human and material resources can provide the nation with several opportunities for national development (Oyabor, 2008) cited in Frank (2021). The nation has proudly relied solely on profits from the sales of crude oil and manages whenever the price of crude oil in the international market goes down. As long as the revenue from the oil can keep all her citizens alive for one more day, an alternative source of income for the country has never been a serious option. However, the government now has a bigger concern as her precious natural resources (crude oil) are being stolen from the site and sold by a self-acclaimed stakeholder (the militant groups in the Niger Delta and their financier). It has been reported that daily, Nigeria is losing more 300,000 barrels of crude oil to illegal bunkering which is equivalent to 15% of the 2.4 million barrels of crude oil produced by the nation (Campbell, 2015). These losses due to oil theft, when quantified into monetary terms, it was discovered that the government is losing \$1.7 billion monthly (Campbell, 2015).

Illegal oil bunkering has made oil spillages and explosions a common occurrence in the Niger Delta region (Campbell, 2015). Nigeria's state oil company and its joint venture partners have spent \$360 million on cleaning up the Niger Delta in the past two years (Bodo & Gimah, 2020).

The Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) claimed that 70 percent of all oil spills throughout the most recent five years was the after effect of sabotage on his facilities (Campbell, 2015).

Information has been regarded as an indispensable asset of any organization, whether public or private. It is presently a parameter for classifying the countries of the world into two main classes, namely information-poor and information-rich countries. Information availability, accessibility, and utilization have a strong relationship with the national development of any country. Hence, information is a national resource that can be used to produce value-added goods and services (Popoola, 2000), cited in Dushu et al (2022).

Information need means an imbalance existing between what a person knows and what the person is supposed to know. In other words, there is a gap existing between the present situation and the more desirable situation. This means that the person is faced with a need that must be bridged by asking questions, creating ideas or obtaining resources (Endouware and Dushu, 2021) However, information needs of various groups of people may depend on the nature of their work or the environment they find themselves in. When a need is felt for something more often than not, people take action in order to satisfy that need and different strategies or modes of actions are resorted to. These strategies used by people in order to satisfy their need for information is the information seeking behavior. The full range of human personal needs is at the root of motivation towards information seeking behavior. It must also be recognized that these needs arise out of the roles an individual fills in social life. The most relevant of these roles is "work role", that is the set of activities, responsibilities etc, of an individual, usually in some organizational setting, in pursuit of earnings and other satisfactions.

Moreover, individuals differ and so do their approach to issues and their approach depend on who is involved. In the view of Aina (2004) information seeking behavior of people varies according to their age, gender, occupation, location, education, exposure and enlightenment, religion and even culture. It can also be influenced by the source of the of the information, content medium, and language of communication, time and nature of information. For instance, in the wider society the way an illiterate woman reacts when she hears the news of the death of a close relation may differ from the way an educated man will react. Information seeking behaviour, according to Patitungkho and Deshpande (2005), is the consequence of a need to satisfy a goal. In other words, information seeking begins when someone perceives that the current state of possessed knowledge is less than that needed to deal with some issues or problems

Statement of the Problem

Oil bunkering encompasses all acts involving oil theft, including diversion and smuggling of oil and unauthorized loading of ships. One common process requires tapping into an oil pipeline and transporting the oil elsewhere to be sold internationally or refined locally. In order to access the oil, a small group of welders will puncture a pipeline at night, establishing a tapping point from which the group can operate. This often leads to Oil spills and explosions are a regular occurrence in the Niger Delta. Roughly a quarter of stolen crude oil is sold locally. Illegal artisanal refineries located in the Delta “cook” the crude into separate petroleum products. The end product yields 2 percent petrol, 2 percent kerosene, and 41 percent diesel. The remaining 55 percent of crude goes to waste, most of which is dumped into the nearby water or into a shallow pit. These illegal activities of economic sabotage are believed to solve the problem of unemployment among the youths.

The researcher is interested in the types of information sought after by the illegal oil bunkers, and their information seeking behaviors. Against this backdrop, the researcher focuses on the information needs and information seeking behaviors of illegal oil bunkers in Imiringi town of Bayelsa state, Nigeria.

Research Questions

Based on the problem stated above, the following questions are raised

1. What are the categories of people involved in oil bunkering in Imiringi town of Bayelsa State?
2. What are the information needs of the oil bunkers in Imiringi town of Bayelsa State?
3. What are the information seeking behavior of oil bunkers in Imiringi town of Bayelsa State

Research Objectives

The general objective of the study is to assess the information needs and information seeking behavior of illegal oil bunkers in Imiringi town of Bayelsa state, in specific terms therefore, the objectives of the study are:

1. To identify the categories of people involved in illegal oil bunkering in Imiringi town of Bayelsa state
2. To identify the information needs of illegal oil bunkers in Imiringi town of Bayelsa state
3. To identify the information seeking behavior of illegal oil bunkers in Imiringi town of Bayelsa state

Significance of the Study

The study will serve as a guide to other students of library science who may be interested in carrying out similar research on information needs and seeking behaviour in other academic

institutions. It will reveal typical information sources that should be present in university libraries. This will enable university libraries to formulate policies in respect to the provision of information services to oil bunkers in the library. The study will also add to the existing literature in the field of librarianship especially in the area of utilization of university library resources. All the beneficiaries will get the result of this study in libraries or when it is published online.

Literature Review

In order to put this research in context, different literatures were reviewed as follow: theoretical framework, conceptual framework, empirical review and summary of reviewed literature

Theoretical Framework

Wilson Theory of Information Seeking Behaviour 1971: Wilson's model of information seeking behaviour was born out of a need to focus the field of information and library science on human use of information, rather than the use of information systems and sources. Previous studies undertaken in the field were primarily concerned with systems, specifically; how an individual uses a system (Wilson, 2000). Very little had been written that examined an individual's information needs, or how information seeking behaviour related to other task-oriented behaviours. Thomas D. Wilson's first model came from a presentation at the University of Maryland in 1971 when "an attempt was made to map the processes involved in what was known at the time as "user need research" (Wilson, 2005). Published in 1981, Wilson's first model outlined the factors leading to information seeking, and the barriers inhibiting action (Wilson, 2005). It stated that information-seeking was prompted by an individual's physiological, cognitive, or affective needs, which have their roots in personal factors, role demands, or environmental context (Wilson, 2005).

In order to satisfy these needs, an individual makes demands upon a system by acting as an intermediary, or through the use of technology. The information provided by the system is then evaluated to determine if it satisfies the individual's needs. This first model was based on an understanding of human information seeking behaviors that are best understood as three interwoven frameworks: The user, the information system, and the information resource.

Conceptual Clarification

Bunkering

Bunkering is a legitimate process where a duly licensed operator provides fuels, water or lubricants (bunkering services) for marine services on request. Therefore, bunkering is simply the fuelling of ship. It could be likened to establishing a floating fuel service station on the high seas or at coastal jetties to supply fuel and provisions including water to ships. However there is the need to differentiate between bunkering from illegal bunkering or oil theft in order to disabuse what is portrayed in the minds of several Nigerians. According to Braide (2005), when petroleum products pipeline get cannibalized, or a ship load of crude oil is stolen and sold off as low-pour fule (LPFO) in international market, its assumed that illegal bunkering has taken place. To drive home the idea, illegal bunkering, involves three types viz:

- i. A minor and small-scale pilfering of condensate and petroleum product destined for the local market.
- ii. Direct hacking into pipelines or tapping with a hose from oil well head.
- iii. Excess lifting of crude oil beyond the licensed amount, using forged bills of lading (Anyio, 2015).

Information Seeking Behaviour

Information-seeking behavior refers to the way people search for and utilize information (Fairer–Wessels, 1990). Most times students' information-seeking behavior involves active or purposeful information-seeking as a result of the need to complete course assignments, prepare for class discussions, seminars, workshops, conferences, or write final year research papers. Fister (1992) noted that undergraduate students are smart people, but find the university library to be a threatening place and find the process of research intimidating. Unfortunately, they do not learn information skills. They end up using trial and error methods of research that limit their capabilities to satisfy their needs. Wilson's 1996 model notes that in the process of seeking information, problems are encountered. Taylor (1990) noted that after interacting with the information sources (like in a library), what a user needs may not tally with what is practically available, due to constraints either within the stock or due to the user's inability. Mellon (1986) noted that students encounter barriers like library anxiety. User's perceptions of the library and its programs also act as an intervening variable to information utilization in the library.

Methodology of the Study

The study adopted descriptive survey design. Descriptive survey is suitable for a study that investigates an existing condition or event in relation to a given population. The area of the study is Imiringi town in Ogbia LGA, Bayelsa state, South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The choice of the South-South zone is based on the fact that, the region is endowed with crude oil in economic quantity, which attracts different oil exploratory activities, legally and illegally, most especially Imiringi town where Shell Petroleum Company (SPDC) currently drills crude oil in over 46 oil wells. Population of the study was made up of all the 150 youths involved in oil

bunkering in the town (DPR, 2020). Total enumerative sampling technique was used meaning; the entire population was used because they were manageable. Data for the study were collected using questionnaire. The instruments were face validated by three experts, to ascertain the appropriateness and suitability of the items and response pattern as they relate to the study. The data that were collected for this research was analysed in tables, using simple percentages and means.

Data Analysis

One hundred and fifty (150) questionnaires were distributed and retrieved without losing any. This represents 100% response rate. The data analysis reflected the three research questions formulated for the study.

Research Question One

What are the categories of people involved in illegal oil bunkering in Imiringi town of Bayelsa state?

The data used to answer the above stated question are presented in Table 1 below;

Table 1: categories of people involved in illegal oil bunkering in Imiringi town of Bayelsa state

categories of people involved in illegal oil bunkering	Freq.	%
Age		
5-10	4	2.7
10-15	24	16
15-20	12	8
20-25	23	15.3
25 and above	87	58
Total	150	100
Marital Status		

Single	12	8
Married	138	92
Total	150	100
Ownership of Bunker site		
Inherited from parents	37	24.7
Purchased	12	8
Rented	78	52
From husband	23	15.3
Total	150	100
Level of Education		
No education	78	52
Primary School level	37	24.7
Secondary level	12	8
Tertiary level	23	15.3
Total	150	100
Years of experience in oil bunkery		
0-5 years	4	2.6
5-10 years	46	30.7
10 years and above	100	66.7
Total	150	100
Household size		
2	3	2
3	42	28
5 and above	105	70
Total	150	100

From the above findings, a large percentage of the respondents 87(58%) are within the age range of 25 and above; about 138 (92%) being the majority of the Illegal oil bunkers were married. The bunker sites were rented 78(52%), just a few 12(8%) out of 150 respondents purchased their bunker sites. Majority of the illegal oil bunkers had no any form of education 78(52%), just 37(24.7%) had a primary school certificate. 100 (66.7%) of the illegal oil bunkers have 10 years bunkery experience in Imiringi town of Bayelsa state. The illegal oil bunkers have 5 and above house hold size constituting the highest 105(70%). This result established that the oil bunkers are mainly a youthful population of married men who are largely without any formal education; carrying out their activities in rented sites for over ten years to cater for house hold size of 5 and above.

Research Question Two

What are the information needs of illegal oil bunkers in Imiringi town of Bayelsa state?

The data for answering the above research question are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: information needs of illegal oil bunkers in Imiringi town of Bayelsa state

Information needs of female plantain farmers	Agree		Disagree		Undecided	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Information about best techniques in oil exploration	90	60	3	2	57	38
Information on registration	57	38	90	60	3	2
Information on how to evade arrest	105	70	28	18.6	17	11.3
Information on best means of transportation	92	61.3	3	2	0	0
Information on government policies and security agents	109	72.6	32	21.3	9	6
Information on price	139	92.6	1	0.6	10	6.6
Information on protection of the environment	2	1.3	67	44.6	81	57
Information on target customers/market	145	96.6	2	1.3	3	2

Information on credit schemes	149	99.3	0	0	1	0.6
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Table 2 reveals that the illegal oil bunkers prefer information on credit scheme (99.3%), customers (96.6%), price (92.6%), government policies and security agents (72.6%), best means of transportation (61.3%), how to evade arrest (70%), and Information about best techniques in oil exploration (60%). Illegal oil bunkers in Imiringi town of Bayelsa state disagreed with the fact that they need information on registration (60%) and information on the protection of the environment (44.6%). This result clearly shows a pattern in information needs of illegal oil bunkers in Imiringi town of Bayelsa

Research Question Three

What are the information seeking behaviors of illegal oil bunkers in Imiringi town of Bayelsa State?

The data for answering the above research question are presented in Table 3 below:

Table 2: information seeking behavior of illegal oil bunkers in Imiringi town of Bayelsa state

Information Source	Very often		Often		Occasionally		Never		Don't know	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Consulting Union/Association	68	34	80	40	48	24	4	2	-	-
Obenibe's (King's) Palace	-	-	47	23.5	70	35	32	16	51	25.5
Local Government Authority	-	-	-	-	21	10.5	179	89.5	-	-
Co-illegal oil Bunkers	53	26.5	112	56	35	17.5	-	-	-	-
Tax Collectors	-	-	-	-	-	-	150	100	-	-

Age group Association	-	-	85	42.5	113	56.5	-	-		1
information brokers	-	-	-	-	136	68	64	32	-	-
Library	-	-	-	-	-	-	150	100	-	-
Television and Radio	-	-	26	13	98	49	76	38	-	-
Newspaper & magazines	-	-	-	-	8	4	92	96	-	-
Village, Drums & Town criers & Whistlings.	72	36	118	59	10	5	-	-	-	-
Churches / Mosques	62	31	98	49	37	18.5	3	1.5	-	-
Friends	81	40.5	92	46	27	13.5	-	-	-	-

The above findings indicate that the most often consulted and available sources of information for the illegal oil bunkers were: family members & friends (40.5%) Village drums, town crier and whistling (36%), Union/Traders (34%), and the churches/mosques (31%) while the library as a result of lack of awareness on the part of the respondents, has never been a source of information for them. The respondents equally affirmed that they often get/acquire information from neighbors & co-illegal oil bunkers (56%), Age group association (42.5%), Obenibe's Palace (23.5%) and Television and Radio (13%).

Discussion

The study without doubt has led to the establishment of facts as regards the information needs information seeking behavior of illegal oil bunkers. It has shown that the majority of them are illiterates whose major means of livelihood is illegal oil bunkering. It has equally shown that in the information age, when survival depends highly on information, the illegal oil bunkers are not provided with adequate relevant information as well as sources of information that can affect their lives and activities better.

The findings of this study would to a large extent represent the scenario in many parts of Nigeria. That the illegal oil bunkers also require information for their enlightenment, entertainment, security, self-help, self-reliance etc is not given the attention it requires. The study revealed that the library was not known or cited as source of information by the illegal oil bunkers. Indeed, it is ranked least among the sources listed. The implication of these findings for the development of library and information profession in Africa is enormous.

Firstly, it shows that libraries, in spite of previous studies and attempts to improve their services, are yet to make appreciable developments

Secondly, the library as a source of information has failed in creating awareness on its existence and services hence it is not patronized by the female plantain farmers.

Thirdly, the local government also has not been forth coming in enlightening and providing relevant information to the illegal oil bunkers.

Recommendations

In view of the above situation, the following recommendations are proffered.

1. The library (staff) should get closer to the illegal oil bunkers and enlighten them on the information and services they provide.
2. The library should provide not only printed materials but also a lot of non-print and audio-visual materials since the illegal oil bunkers obtain and understand information better through oral, visual and auditory means of communication. The library can equally repackage some of the printed materials into non-print form.
3. The local government should be sending Information brokers to educate the illegal oil bunkers on the protection of the environment.

4. The local government should equally organize adult education programme for the illegal oil bunkers as this will enhance their information utilization capacity.
5. Library should commence collaboration with media houses and other government information agencies to package and disseminate information to the various groups of illegal oil bunkers.
6. Community outreach programmes should equally be organized and used to disseminate information that would aid the socio-economic, political and general enlightenment of the illegal oil bunkers

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