INTRODUCTION

The objective of this study was to establish information seeking behaviour by the employees of the State Department of the East African Community Integration with a view of improving it. The Department of East African Community coordinates the activities of East African Community in Kenya. East African community is an inter-governmental organization comprising six Partner States namely: Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania and South Sudan. While striving to fulfill this mandate, the department strives to develop policies, projects and programmes of EAC. It coordinates monitors and evaluates the implementation of EAC policies, projects and programmes and liaises with the public and private sector stakeholders on EAC matters. It maintains linkages between East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) and the Kenya National Assembly and EAC institutions, line Ministries and other related institutions.

The main objective of EAC is to promote sustainable development of the region and create a prosperous internationally competitive, secure and politically united region, the six EAC Partner.

States are well aware that by pooling resources and potential, they are well on their way to realizing common development goals more easily than when they work alone. The term information seeking behaviour has been used in the research literature since the 1950's [1]. Thereafter it took several decades for the subject to be presented as a major field of study. Some of the most important studies of information behaviour include: Ellis' [2] behavioural model of information searching strategies, Kuhlthau's [3] information search process,
OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To investigate information seeking behaviour by the employees of the State Department of the East African Integration.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objective of this study is to investigate the information seeking behaviour of employees of the State Department of East African Integration. This study will attempt to establish the type of information they seek for and what prompts them to seek for this information.
African Community Integration with a view of improving it.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS
1. What is the type of information do the employees of the State Department of East African Community Integration seek for?
2. What prompts them to look for this information?
3. How do they seek for this information?
4. What can be done to improve their information seeking behavior

METHODOLOGY
Research Design
This study was a qualitative research in nature. Creswell [9] defines qualitative research as an “inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore asocial or human problem”. Qualitative research is generally based on the belief that the people personally involved in a particular situation are best placed to describe and explain their experience and feelings in their own words.

Therefore they should be allowed to speak without the mediation of the researcher and without being overly strained by the framework imposed by the researcher [10]. In the context of the State department of East African Integration employees, there was need of finding out what type of information they sought for; what prompted them to seek information and how do they go about seeking information to the full advantage of the Department. This resulted in employing a qualitative research strategy because it is a design which combines the individual research participants, the researcher as a research instrument and appropriate data collection technique in a collaborative process of producing meaning from data and using that meaning to develop theory. The study was qualitative one where the researcher fully engaged the participants in an interview while being guided by the semi - structured interview schedules.

Participants
Population is a group of participants, objects or items from which samples are taken for measurement [11]. Orodho [12] defines population as that population from which the researcher wants to generalize results of the study. The study was carried out in the State department of East African Integration in Nairobi.

The total population of the State department of EAC Affairs staff was 200 employees. That constituted study population comprising integration officers, administrators, Economists, accountants, procurement officers, support staff and drivers. The researcher noted that the State department of East African Integration had another category of staff notably the interns who were working in various departments but providing critical services. The interns were neither interviewed nor included in the pilot study sample. The researcher used purposive sampling and interview schedules to gather information from participants. That method of sampling was used since the researcher intended to interview participants who were likely to provide pertinent information to the study.

The researcher used a sample size of 50% of the total population 200. That sample size was ideal since in qualitative research one does not require large numbers of participants provided one gets enough information which can be relied on. To ensure that all the categories of staff participated in the study, the participants were drawn from all the five directorates. The department has two regional integration centres namely: Namaga and Busia Borders. The researcher visited the two centres to collect data from the staff there. It was believed that if the participants were drawn from the five directorates in the Department and the two Centres, it would form a good representative sample of the total population of the Department.

Measures
The researcher employed interview method for data collection for this study. The researcher developed interview schedules that contained questions that were used as a guide. That ensured that the interview was carried out systematically and that all the participants were subjected to the same questions in all the five directorates within State department of East African Integration.

Procedure
The researcher booked an appointment with the participants. The process of collecting data was by means of face to face approach. The researcher visited the participants in their respective offices and also excused himself to the participants by also asking the whether they were ready for him. That was to avoid a situation where he could put the participants under pressure in case they were busy. Once the researcher was welcomed and ushered in that gave an indication that they were ready for him. The researcher asked questions in the order they appeared on the interview schedule. He recorded responses on the schedule and had a tape recorder to assist him later on where there was need for clarifications.

The researcher sought permission from the participants to use the tape recorder. The researcher created an atmosphere that enabled him to get more honest answers and in the process of the interview established a rapport between himself and the interviewee.
Semi-structured interview schedules provided an opportunity for participants to respond to issues more appropriately. The interviews schedules were flexible, to the point and made it appear as if it was a mere discussion. Interviewing schedules also made participants to respond to issues in a more open and exhaustive way. The prepared interviewing schedules were used as a guide and this assisted in ensuring that there was a flow of information.

**RESULTS**

**Research question 1:** What type of information do they seek for?

The researcher sought to establish the types of information they normally seek and in what formats the information was presented. All the participants interviewed indicated that the information they sought was presented in both electronic and print formats. A total of 58 (76%) from all the technical directorates indicated that they seek information on policy formulation, EAC decisions that are made at various levels and any information that can enable them carry out their coordination role as State department of East African Integration.

The 18 (24%) who were interviewed were from the administrative directorate who provide support services in the department.

They sought information because information enhanced their capacity, need to know, and current information, personal enhancement and academic progression. The participants from the technical directorates were also of the same view.

Arising out of the above responses, it can be argued that the types of information sought by state department of East African Integration employees rotated on EAC coordination and integration matters.

The staff of State department of East African Integration had indicated that they seek for information because of a number of reasons among them to enable them perform their duties effectively; need to know and need to advance professionally in their careers. Wakeham *et al* [13] defined information need as “what is perceived to be required for the competent performance of professional task”. An understanding of information needs therefore focuses on why information is required and the source from which it is obtained. Wakeham in his definition of information needs attests to this. It is for this reason that they would seek for the type of information that will enhance their performance. It was important to appreciate that, those employees at State department of east African Integration were professionals and trained in different fields. It therefore follows that their information needs are diversified in nature. Although the staff at State department of East African Integration might be compelled to seek for the type of information that was likely to enhance their performance at work, they would also would like to seek for information that was likely make them generally to learn as Maslow may attest to this.

**Research question 2:** What are the factors prompting them to seek information?

The participants were asked to indicate what prompted them to seek information. All participants from all the five directorates 76(100%) indicated that skills gap, office assignment, personal interest, personal enhancement, professional growth, when need arises, need to know, to be updated, new technological changes and to be accurate in their work were the major reasons why they sought information. In the technical directorates all the participants 58 (76%) agreed that the major reason why they sought information in addition to the above reasons was that to enable them handle EAC matters.

Those were participants from the technical directorates apart from 18(24%) from the administrative directorate who provide support services. It was noted that the core mandate of the State department of East African Integration was coordination of EAC affairs in Kenya.

It can then be argued that most of the employees at State department of east African Integration seek information in their pursuit to fulfil their mandate of coordination. Maslow [14] in his hierarchy of needs theory proposed that motivation is the result of a person’s attempt at fulfilling five basic needs: physiological, safety, social, esteem and self actualization. According to Maslow, these needs can create internal pressures that can influence a person’s behaviour.

The needs theories attempt to identify internal factors that motivate an individual’s behaviour and are based on the premise that people are motivated by unfulfilled needs. If one looks at the needs we do have esteemed needs that refer to the need for self esteem and respect, with respect and admiration from others. Not every employee in State department of east African Integration was a technical officer who was involved in coordination matters but we might have other employees who might be prompted to seek for information due some other compelling factors. Some of these factors might be need to learn as articulated by Maslow in his theory of humanistic learning to (1908-1970). Because of diversified nature of needs Wilson’s definition of information seeking Wilson [4] stated that, "those activities a person may engage in when identifying their own needs for information, searching for such information in any way, and using or transferring that information” Wilson is agreement that...
people will always seek for information because of a number of reasons.

Although it can be argued that staff of State department of East African Integration might want to seek for information because of other compelling reasons, needs associated with their work stand out as the most compelling factor [13].

Research Question 3:- How do they seek for information?

The participants were asked how they sought information. All the 76 (100%) participants indicated visited the library, visit websites, internet and intranet, visit the registry, peruse files, and approach whoever has the information, through books and reports, through memos, telephone calls, staff mail and through collaboration with MDAs.

The participants were asked to indicate how easily and readily the information is available at the State department of East African Integration. A total of 60 (80 %) participants across the five directorates indicated that information at State department of East African Integration is easily and readily available since the internet is available. Both library and registry are always open.

They had arranged their information well and run by skilled manpower while 16 (20%) were of the contrary view.

That information in State department of east African Integration was not readily available since it depended on the nature of information sought. For example, information on IFMIS (integrated financial management Information System), information on vested interest was difficult to get, low staffing levels in the library, communication in the department was not effective and retrieval of information was still not effective and took more time.

Research Question 4: - How does Information sought relate to EAC integration agenda?

The participants were further asked to state whether the information they sought had any bearing on the integration agenda. That was meant to determine whether the employees of State department of East African Integration were on the right track as far as EAC integration process was concerned. A total of 76(100%) of all the participants agreed that the information they sought at State department of East African Integration assisted them to make informed decisions. They indicated that information sought assisted them in: informing stakeholders and creating awareness; setting agenda for regional integration; formulation of policy; developing position papers; co-ordinating and implementing the decisions of the council of Ministers among others.

It can then be argued that if information sought could facilitate the above roles then their information seeking activity was a vital tool in propelling EAC integration agenda.

When the importance of information is looked at from the government point of view, a number of authors, such as Neelameghan [14] and Camara [15], hint that planners, developers and Governments do not yet acknowledge the role of information as a basic resource, or are unaware of its potential value [16]. It can be true that if these authors hold a contrary view that governments and other planners are ignorant on what information is all about and the role it can play in development then there is need for concerted efforts to be made to achieve this. Many authors, such as Sturges & Neill [16]; Boon [17]; Van Rooyen [18]; view information as one of the most important resources needed for both rural and urban development. East African community is an inter-governmental organization comprising five partner states namely: Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Tanzania.

It therefore sounds ironical for these governments not to understand the value of information yet most of the policies, decisions and projects cannot be implemented by them without seeking and having adequate information.

It then follows that if governments which form the EAC of which Kenya is part cannot appreciate information and then there is a problem. It is important to note that when the employees at State department of East African Integration were asked whether they valued information, they all responded in the affirmative. The problem then can be at the policy making level of these governments.

CONCLUSION

That information sought by employees of State department of east African Integration was information related to EAC integration process since a small proportion mainly from administrative directorate indicated that they sought information to better them in other disciplines of interest. That meant that the type of information they sought was met by virtue of looking for information pertinent to the work they do and answered the research question. The study concluded that tools used by staff at State department of East African Integration to seek and access information were internet but not limited to other sources.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions from the study, the researcher came up with the following
recommendations which if adopted can enhance information seeking behaviour by employees at State department of East African Integration.

During the interview, it was indicated by the participants that they had some challenges in accessing and retrieval digital while seeking for information. That was attributed to lack of enough literacy skills on the part of the staff. It was therefore recommended that librarians at State department of East African Integration should mount an effective IL programme. Information Literacy (IL) is defined as the ability to recognize when information is needed and how to locate, evaluate, use information effectively and responsibly and communicate.

It is assumed that if the librarians at the department conduct or impart literacy, the skills will empower the user of staff at State department of East African Integration to: solve problems; create new ideas; make informed decisions and turn data into meaning to create knowledge. It was also recommended that ICT officers, librarians, and record officers should improve information retrieval tools to enable staff seeking information access and use information easily.

REFERENCES