An evaluation of information Literacy Skills of Parliamentarians in Kenya: A Case Study of County Women Representatives

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Abstract: This study was an evaluation of information literacy skills of County Women representatives in Kenya. The study adopted quantitative research approach techniques. The findings established that there is great need of information literacy skills amongst County Women representatives. The study recommended a continuous training in all aspects of information literacy to both parliamentarians and parliamentary library staff to keep them on board with advancing information technology. This will help in enhancing the quality of information generated at parliament for policy development in social, economic and political spheres.
Keywords: information literacy, information search, retrieval, information needs

INTRODUCTION

As the national and global economy become knowledge-based, everyday knowledge gains a special place as an essential tool for economic development. Local occupations depend on theories; information and new knowledge delivered by libraries for efficiency, and parliamentary libraries have an essential role in this [1].

In many developing countries, literacy among members of national assembly has been poor for many years. This has left both legislative debates and decision-making processes in parliament to be driven more by personal opinion and political sentiments, rather than objective facts and empirical evidence. Legislative representation has always been an integral part of political administration, especially where governments (including legislatures) routinely consult, interact, and exchange views and information with the public, so as to enable the citizens to contribute to good governance, express their preferences and provide their

support for decisions that affect their lives and livelyhoods [2].

The introduction, however, of a pioneering and innovate Legislative Research and Library Services, one of the very first of such services on the African continent, has revolutionized legislative debates and decision- making. The evolution and contribution of library and research services in the work of parliaments can no longer be ignored in growing democracies. Library and research resources do facilitate generation of consensus, debates and decision making at both the Committee, plenary and constituency levels of the work of legislators. This has provided an efficient research and reference service to which women county representatives are increasingly turning for help and reference. The information service has been essential, among other things, highlighting policy alternatives and drawing attention to policy consequences; and providing access to information as a prerequisite for in-depth analysis and debate [3].

METHODOLOGY

This study was implemented through case study. As per Mugenda [4] a case study is a detailed investigation of an individual group, institution or phenomenon. Wills and Onen [5] observed that the general motivation behind a case is to think about a solitary element inside and out so as to pick up knowledge into the bigger cases. This study adopted a quantitative research approach. The design helped verify the research questions and explained the status of information literacy skills of members of parliament.

The study employed both probability and non probability sampling methods in selecting respondents. Purposive sampling, in particular was used in selection of women county representatives as a case for this study. Simple random sampling was used to select women representative's individuals who participated in this study. Snowballing techniques or "chain referral" methods that provide a potentially attractive solution to respondents who are difficult to reach was also used as stated by Beauchemin and González-Ferrer [6]. The study used Krejcie & Morgan table [7] in   determining

sample size. The total population for this study was 47 women in parliament. Out of the 47 County women representative, 40 of them were selected for interview using Krejcie & Morgan table [7]. The interview schedule was used to collect data from the women county representatives. The quantitative data collected was analyzed by the use of frequency tables using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0.

RESULTS

The study findings revealed that two thirds (26; 65%) of the respondents have participated in information literacy skills training while 35% have not participated in any information literacy training. Most (12; 85.7%) of the respondents reported that they would like to have training on information literacy skills as opposed to 2 (14.3%) who indicated that they did not need such training. On computer skills, 12.5% were undecided whether they had the skills. The study established that that there is great need for information for parliamentarians in order to inform various functions within the house (Table 1).

Slightly more than half (22; 55%) of the respondents reported that they did have the information skills to use parliamentary library services while 18; 45% said they didn't have the skills (Figure 3). Majority (21; 91.3%) of respondents said they were good at internet skills followed by 15; 65.2% who stated to be good at information search skills. Slightly more than half (12; 52.2%) of the respondents reported to be good at using manual catalogue while slightly more than a third (8;34 %) of respondents stated to be good in use of electronic catalogue (Table 2).

Two thirds (29; 72.5%) of the respondents agreed that they had attended a training on computer skills while 11; 27.5% of the respondents said they have never been trained in computer skills (Figure 4). More than half (17; 58.6%) of the respondents who had

attended computer training skills said they knew how to use it while 12; 41.4% of the respondents did not know how to use the internet/ World Wide Web (Figure 5).

More than half (25; 62.5%) of the respondents said they had requisite search and retrieval skills to make use of parliamentary library resources while more than a third (15; 37.5%) said they did not have the skills (Figure 6). More than half (21; 52.5%) of the respondents disagreed that they need library staff support to enable them to search and retrieve information for use in the house (Table 3).

On ability to organize electronic information by themselves, 16; 40% said they had the skills while 12; 30 % of the respondents said they didn't have with the same number being undecided. Majority (37; 92.5%) of respondents disagreed that they are sometimes involved in the description of electronic information similar to those who disagreed also that they are able to access management information system (MIS) that help to organize electronic information. Similarly, (29.72.5%) of the respondents disagreed that organizing information manually by themselves is easier than organizing that information electronically (Table 4).

On ability to synthesize information, the study showed that respondents had perception of lacking the ability (Table 5). The same pattern was revealed on ability to evaluate information, where 16; 40% were not aware whether there existed a system that could help them in evaluating information while 22; 55% said there wasn't such a system (Figure 7). Lack of the system to many caused inability to evaluate and monitor information (Table 6).

On Information literacy challenges faced by members of parliament, 80% of respondents agreed that they face search skills and ICT challenges respectively (Table 7).
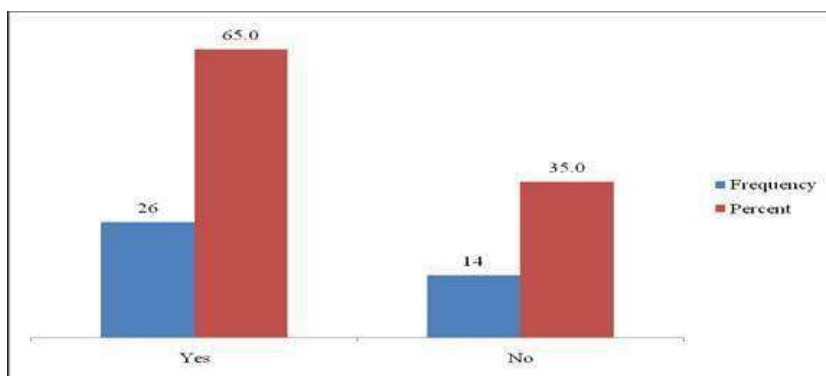

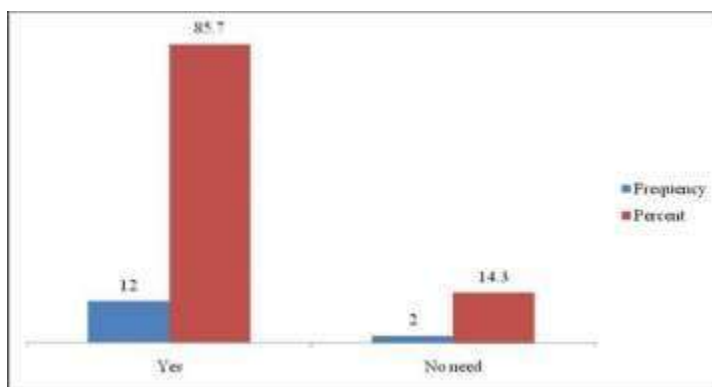**Fig-1: Participation on information literacy skills training**

Fig-2: willingness to have the training to acquire information skills

Table-1: Perceptions on information needs for County women representatives

| Statement	Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
I am competent enough in terms of computer skills	23	57.5	12	30.0	5	12.5	0	0.0	0	0.0
Members of Parliament need information										
….to inform the quality of bill formulation	29	72.5	11	27.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
.. to inform the quality of motions in the House	23	57.5	11	27.5	2	5.0	2	5.0	2	5.0
… information to inform the quality of questioning in the House	14	35.0	16	40.0	6	15.0	2	5.0	2	5.0
..information to inform general knowledge	18	45.0	16	40.0	2	5.0	2	5.0	2	5.0
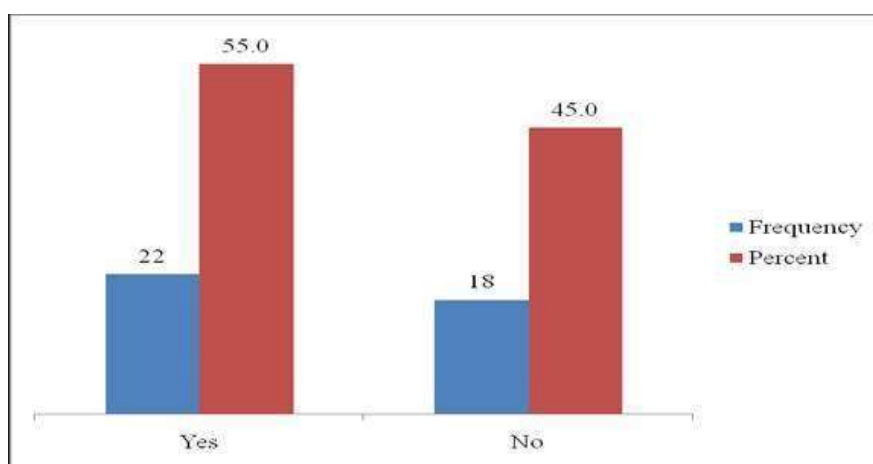
Fig-3: Information skills to use parliamentary library services

Table-2: Information skills to use parliamentary library services

Skills	Frequency	Percentage
Information search Skills	15	65.2
Use of Electronic Catalogue	8	34.8
Use of Manual Catalogue	12	52.2
Internet Search skills	21	91.3

NB: Multiple responses; only those who said have requisite information literacy skills
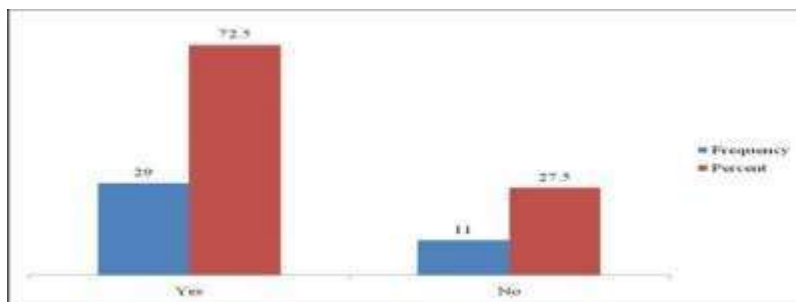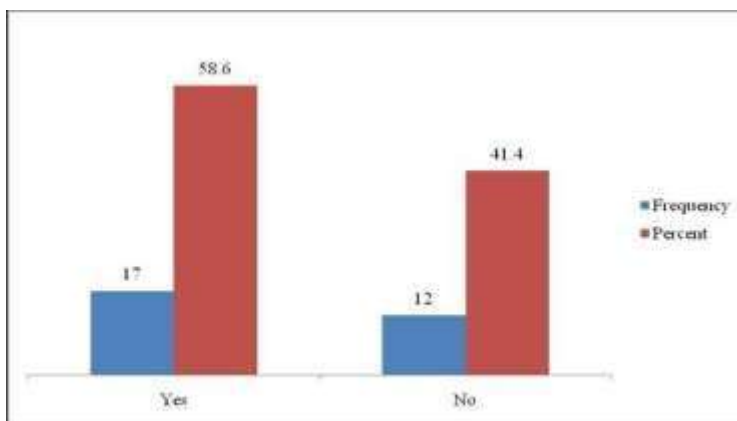
Fig-4: Computer skills training
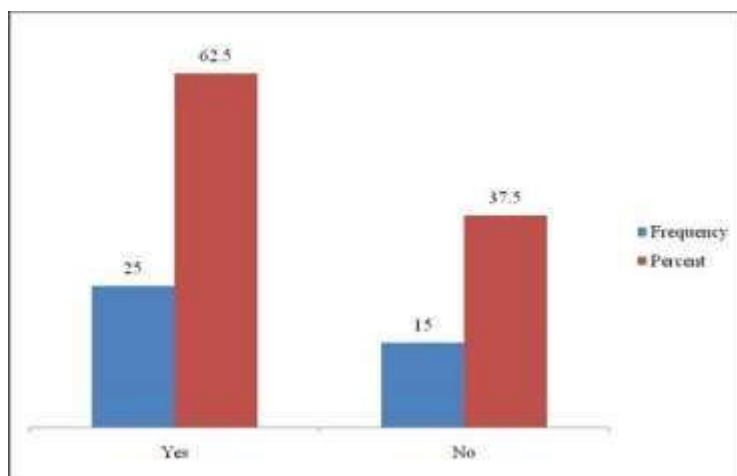

Fig-5: Search and retrieval skills

Fig-6: Use of internet/World Wide Web

Table-3: Perceptions towards ability to search and retrieve information

Statement	Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
I can search and retrieve information										
…for use in the library using the manual catalogue	19	47.5	11	27.5	3	7.5	3	7.5	4	10.0
….information for use in the library using the electronic catalogue	2	5.0	28	70.0	2	5.0	4	10.0	4	10.0
….information for use in the library physically on the shelves	24	60.0	6	15.0	4	10.0	4	10.0	2	5.0
I need library staff support to search and retrieve information for use in the house	2	5.0	15	37.5	2	5.0	19	47.5	2	5.0

Table-4: perceptions on ability to organize and use information

Statement	Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
I can organize electronic information by myself	3	7.5	13	32.5	12	30.0	9	22.5	3	7.5
I am sometimes involved in the description of electronic information	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	7.5	9	22.5	28	70.0
Organizing information manually by myself is easier than organizing that information electronically	3	7.5	5	12.5	3	7.5	17	42.5	12	30.0
I am able to access management information system(MIS) that help to organize electronic information	1	2.5	1	2.5	1	2.5	5	12.5	32	80.0

Table-5: Ability to synthesize information

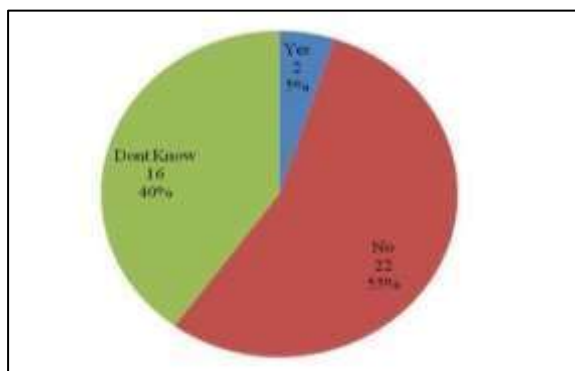| Statement	Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
I am involved in information synthesize that is generated from the Parliamentary Library	2	5.0	2	5.0	1	2.5	17	42.5	18	45.0
I am able to synthesize and build upon existing information, contributing to the creation of new knowledge	12	30.0	16	40.0	3	7.5	4	10.0	5	12.5
I can use information to contributing to the creation of new knowledge but with lots of difficulties	2	5.0	5	12.5	3	7.5	9	22.5	21	52.5
I can easily identify and match verbatim information for later quote in a right way	9	22.5	17	42.5	7	17.5	7	17.5	0	0.0

Fig-7: Availability of a system that assist to monitor and evaluate information

Table-6: Perceptions towards ability to evaluate information

Statement	Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
I have the ability to..										
monitor and evaluate information that is electronically generated from our library	7	17.5	10	25.0	0	0.0	5	12.5	18	45.0
compare and evaluate information obtained from different sources	6	15.0	6	15.0	5	12.5	5	12.5	18	45.0
read information and select main ideas	15	37.5	6	15.0	0	0.0	6	15.0	13	32.5
investigate various viewpoints of Literature	5	12.5	6	15.0	5	12.5	0	0.0	24	60.0
use and apply information techniques for studying	6	15.0	5	12.5	0	0.0	5	12.5	24	60.0

Table-7: Information literacy challenges faced by members of parliament

Challenges	Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Women County representatives face search skills challenges	25	62.5	7	17.5	4	10.0	2	5.0	2	5.0
Women County representatives ICT challenges	12	30.0	20	50.0	1	2.5	2	5.0	5	12.5
Women County representatives face orientation challenges	2	5.0	17	42.5	4	10.0	13	32.5	4	10.0
Women County representatives lack time to use library information	9	22.5	12	30.0	3	7.5	6	15.0	10	25.0

CONCLUSION

There is a gap of information need and literacy skills for parliamentarians that have widened leading to lack of continuous training that is needed to keep them at bay with the current advancing information technology. The results also showed that there is a gap between the knowledge of parliamentarians and ICT skills that would make them utilize maximal parliamentary library services. Furthermore, this is due to lack of a friendly monitoring and evaluation system for information that can help parliamentarians evaluate and synthesize information generated at the parliament library hence there is inability of members to evaluate information that is electronically generated from different sources, read information and be able to select main ideas that can inform their debates in parliament and make the information in their use probably in their studies.

The study therefore recommended that, continuous training on literacy skills for members of parliament on range of literacy aptitudes is necessary. The training will equip the members of parliament with solid abilities to carry on their legislative functions. Not only should this training target the individuals who had never attended in any training on information literacy skills but also those who have. This will make sure that every Member of Parliament is at board in upgrading with the current changing trends in information technology.

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