

Dennis Ocholla · Omwoyo Bosire Onyancha ·  
Aderonke Olaitan Adesina *Editors*

# Information, Knowledge, and Technology for Teaching and Research in Africa

Information Behavior in Knowledge and  
Economy

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# **Synthesis Lectures on Information Concepts, Retrieval, and Services**

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Aderonke Olaitan Adesina  
Editors

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Information Behavior in Knowledge  
and Economy

 Springer

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## Foreword

The main driver for progress in information seeking in essence, dwells on the relationship between users' information needs, their immediate demands and purposes/tasks identified thereof. The information related to fulfilling these needs involves several processes characterized by multitudes of different materials from various sources and formats; and new methods for discovering and selecting information. This book *Information, Knowledge, and Technology for Teaching and Research in Africa: Information Behavior in Knowledge and Economy* presents a brilliant narrative in seven chapters on the topic which forms the cornerstone of information-seeking behavior studies. The knowledge economy on the other hand, points to the ability to make the most of on scientific discoveries and applied research, which resultantly generates big data. This book is important as it articulates literature, case studies, and some of the theoretical frameworks that can be adopted in information-seeking research.

The book begins with an informetric perspective by Omwoyo Bosire Onyancha titled: “[Which Way Information Seeking Behaviour as a Research Area in the Library and Information Science Field? An Informetric Study](#)” This chapter looks at progress in information seeking, publication trends across disciplines, spanning over a period of six decades. The findings highlight the interdisciplinary nature of information-seeking behavior research from 1961 to 2023 with a wide subject orientation outside the humanities and social sciences.

The second chapter by Ikoja-Odongo looks at “[Information Needs and Uses of the Informal Sector Entrepreneurs: A Conceptual, Contextual and Historiographic Review](#)”, dwelling mostly on this sector of the economy in Uganda. The dearth of literature on the activities of informal sector practitioners motivated this study. Illiteracy, lower levels of education poor infrastructure were found to stifle the adoption of ICT-based platforms for information sharing for business among the practitioners.

“[Financial Literacy Amongst Women Entrepreneurs for Economic Empowerment in Kenya](#)” constitutes the third chapter and is co-authored by Joyce W. Kinyanjui and Denis Ocholla. The study brings to light economic empowerment of women entrepreneurs

in that when financially literate, women can make independent decisions and take control of their financial destinies. To overcome the challenges, training on special skills and aptitudes becomes inevitable.

Ease of access to library services can present challenges to users with disabilities as they require special assistance aided by assistive technologies in some instances. The fourth chapter “[Library Service Provision for Students with Disabilities in Academic Libraries: A Literature Review](#)” by Dorothy Doreen Eneya and Aderonke Olaitan Adesina provides a literature review on Library Service Provision for Students with Disabilities in Academic Libraries. Based on searches in databases, developing countries faced more barriers to accessing academic libraries in contrast to those in advanced economies. Funding and implementation regulations were thus important for successful all-encompassing library services due to the high costs of assistive technologies involved.

The nature of information resources and infrastructural facilities contribute significantly to the provision of quality services by libraries. Service quality is influenced by several variables impacting on service quality. In the fifth chapter “[Applying Service Quality Theoretical Framework for Quality Service Delivery in Academic Libraries from an African Library Perspective](#)”, Paul Mbuu reviews issues of quality, particularly in higher education and in academic libraries using the GAP model (and the Servqual tool) as the theoretical foundation for service quality research in academic libraries from an African library perspective. The chapter brings to the fore the intricacy and array of service quality parameters, identifying factors critical in improving the service quality within academic libraries.

The exponential growth of information being generated, and information sources has brought to fore the need for library users to possess skills that will enable them to efficiently access, evaluate and use available resources. In the sixth chapter “[Information Literacy Skills of Students in Secondary Schools with African Perspective. A Literature Review](#)” by John Mwaura Ileri reviews literature on Information Literacy Skills of Students in Secondary Schools in Kenya. Despite the importance attached to IL skills, background, school environments, poor infrastructure including ICTs and libraries were identified as major hindrances in the study, and in cited literature.

Lastly, the seventh chapter “[Reflections on Trends, Challenges and Opportunities of LIS Research in South Africa. A Contextual Discourse](#)” by Dennis Ocholla navigates trends, challenges, and opportunities of LIS Research in South Africa. As a prominent proponent of LIS education, Ocholla fuses personal experience and literature to inform anticipated future advancement in the discipline. Academics in the LIS discipline was mentioned in the popular indexed journals with significant increase in research collaboration among researchers in South Africa, both within and without institutions. The importance of funding backed by legislation to support research was also applauded as a positive investment in LIS research in South Africa.

The technical depth and knowledge exhibited in the seven cases shows how the generation and use of a range of information sources is impacting on LIS research and the library

services delivery landscape. This book is very important to students and researchers of information behavior research as it explores the emerging themes through literature review and case studies. I recommend this book to students and researchers as they will find this collection very engaging in every chapter.

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## Preface

Information behavior research is popular and one of the major focal points in Library and Information Science (LIS) research because of the importance of knowing consumer or user relationships and the challenges of accessing, succeeding, and using knowledge products and services provided by the market or knowledge economy defined by quantity, quality, and accessibility to information. The increased use of information and communication technologies and computer human interaction and user interfaces is making research in the domain more attractive and demanding. We believe that information behavior research cannot be dismissed as most studies show its leading role in LIS research and indeed in information systems design and improvement, even beyond the LIS sector, as reflected in chapter one of this book. The knowledge economy, which is increasingly driven by data, information, and fourth industrial revolution (e.g., internet of things and AI) technologies is adding pressure to information-seeking behavior research in different ways. We seem to agree that information products and services cannot be provided effectively without the knowledge of their users and how they access and use them. The chapters in this book address this important and growing research area.

The first and opening chapter of this book, which links well with chapter two, entitled “[Which Way Information Seeking Behaviour as a Research Area in the Library and Information Science Field? An Informetric Study](#)” is written by Omwoyo Bosire Onyancha, from the University of South Africa. The chapter explores the evolution and current state of information-seeking behaviors research within LIS and uses informetric methodology, based on SCOPUS subjects, and keywords from 1961 to 2023 to achieve this. The findings reveal the growth of research in the domain, dispelling doubts about its survival as an important LIS research domain. The interdisciplinary nature of this field and the influence of technology underscores its viability in the future which also reiterates its importance in informing practice, policy, and the design of information systems today and in the future. In the second chapter, Robert Ikoja-Odongo, from Soroti University, writes on “[Information Needs and Uses of the Informal Sector Entrepreneurs: A Conceptual, Contextual and Historiographic Review](#)” and reviews historical literature in the domain. At

the time of his Ph.D. study (1999–2002), he noted that few studies delved into the informal sector and relatively few studies of information needs and uses with focus on Africa and Uganda in particular. There is also a wide information gap in government, NGOs, and other stakeholders in the sector regarding what they do, yet the sector contributes substantially to the national economy. Robert concludes that an appropriate model for information behavior for information-poor communities like the informal entrepreneurs must be grounded on oral traditions and indigenous knowledge and should be sensitive to poverty, infrastructure, and illiteracy. Also, there is a need for information repackaging and the use of appropriate media for information provision. The third chapter, entitled “[Financial Literacy Amongst Women Entrepreneurs for Economic Empowerment in Kenya](#)” is co-authored by Joyce Wangui Kinyanjui and Dennis Ocholla, from the University of Zululand. The study confirms that financial literacy skills are a major factor in women’s economic empowerment. Women entrepreneurs acquire financial literacy skills through social constructionism. Lack of financial literacy skills is hindering women entrepreneurs from becoming economically empowered. This study proposes that regular assessment of women entrepreneurs’ financial literacy skills be carried out, and tailor-made training courses to fulfill these needs be introduced. The authors suggest focus areas such as computing, loans, reading and understanding bank statements, budgeting, spending, saving, and investing in business ventures. The fourth chapter, “[Library Service Provision for Students with Disabilities in Academic Libraries: A Literature Review](#)” written by Dorothy Doreen Eneya, from the University of Malawi, and Aderonke Olaitan Adesina, from Nottingham Trent University and the University of Zululand, is a topical area in LIS research and practice. The chapter focuses on the role of academic libraries in universities, library services for students with disabilities, and accessibility of library services to students with disabilities, including the accessibility of library websites; assistive technologies for students with disabilities; challenges faced by academic libraries in providing services to students with disabilities, and the impact of policy and legislation on academic library service provision for students with disabilities; The chapter is underpinned by the social model of disability, which posits that disability is socially constructed. The fifth chapter, entitled “[Applying Service Quality Theoretical Framework for Quality Service Delivery in Academic Libraries from an African Library Perspective](#),” is written by Paul Mbua from Dedan Kimathi University of Technology and the University of Zululand. The chapter focuses on how the models could be used to enhance and improve service delivery in academic libraries by expounding on the theoretical frameworks of service quality. The sixth chapter, referring to “[Information Literacy Skills of Students in Secondary Schools with African Perspective. A Literature Review](#)” is written by John Mwaura Ileri from Chuka University and the University of Zululand. In the chapter, John unpack the concept of information literacy and its significance, the challenges and role of stakeholders, and advice that it is important for governments to incorporate information literacy knowledge into academic programs to ensure that citizens are enlightened and equipped with knowledge to function effectively in the modern world. The chapter delves

into the extant literature discussing information literacy in secondary schools and highlights prevalent challenges and opportunities. The seventh and last chapter “[Reflections on Trends, Challenges and Opportunities of LIS Research in South Africa. A Contextual Discourse](#)” is written by Dennis Ocholla from the University Zululand. Dennis acknowledges that Library and Information Science research is rapidly changing in South Africa and builds on related studies, some bibliometrics and experiential knowledge as LIS academic to the changing trends, challenges, and opportunities of library and information science research in the country. The issues of quantitative and qualitative research growth as well as research visibility, collaboration and support are discussed. The challenges relating to LIS research capacity building among others are highlighted. The research support opportunity in the country is recognized and commended for future growth if sustained.

All chapters have been blind peer reviewed by at least two reviewers of good academic standing from Africa and their valuable recommendations duly incorporated to improve the quality of the chapters. We thank the reviewers for their time and valuable input for quality control of the book. We also thank the contributors to this book for their quality chapters and for enabling knowledge sharing globally. We strongly believe the book will be valuable for university-level teaching and research in Africa, and perhaps elsewhere, where such knowledge would be valuable for comparative studies.

Richards Bay, South Africa  
Pretoria, South Africa  
Nottingham, England, UK

Dennis Ocholla  
Omwoyo Bosire Onyancha  
Aderonke Olaitan Adesina

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### About the Editors

**Dennis Ocholla** Ph.D., graduated with a Ph.D. in Library and Information Science in Kiev and Saint Petersburg/Leningrad in the former USSR in 1988. He is currently a Research Fellow at UNIZULU after retirement as a Senior Professor at the university in 2022. He joined the University of Zululand as Professor (FP) and Head of the Department of Library and Information Science (1996–2014) and appointed Senior Professor at the University in 2006. He started his academic career at Moi University in Kenya, as a lecturer in 1988 and later Senior Lecturer and Head of the Department of Library and Information Studies before moving to the University of Botswana as a Visiting Scholar (1995–1996). He has served the University of Zululand as Dean (1998–1999), Vice Dean (2007–2011), Deputy Dean of Research and Internationalization (2014–2019), in the Faculty of Arts (now Humanities and Social Sciences). His research and teaching interest—where he has published and graduated with many masters and Ph.D.s—include—information seeking, KM and IKS, ICT4D/Human-computer interaction—user interfaces, LISE, data science—bibliometric/informetrics, information practices—information seeking, information ethics, scholarly communication, and research methods. He serves/has served in the editorial and peer review boards of many local (RSA) (e.g., SAJLIS) and international journals (e.g., Library Management, Informetrics, LIBRI), conferences, and research organizations/councils. He was the Editor-in-Chief of *Inkanyiso: Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* (2009–2022) and before that, Editor-in-Chief of *South African Journal of Libraries and Information Science* (2002–2008). He has received research awards including NRF [RSA] established researcher rating (until 2028). Some of his research publications can be accessed at: <https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=OJHFQG0AAAAJ&hl=en>.

**Omwoyo Bosire Onyancha** Ph.D., is a Research Professor at the Department of Information Science, University of South Africa (Unisa). He is also the Head of Graduate Studies and Research at the College of Human Science, Unisa. He holds a Ph.D. in Library and Information Science and is a C2 National Research Foundation (SA)-rated researcher. His areas of research interest include Informetrics and Scientometrics, Information and Knowledge Management, Science Communication, and Knowledge Mobilization. He has explored these areas of research interest in order to advance the academic and societal understanding of how information and knowledge are created, disseminated, and utilized in various contexts. Furthermore, his research has provided insights into the impact of information and communication technologies in information processing and use, the role of metadata in information retrieval, and the importance of knowledge management in organizational performance. Some of his research can be accessed at: [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Omwoyo\\_Onyancha/contributions](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Omwoyo_Onyancha/contributions).

**Aderonke Olaitan Adesina** Ph.D., is an academic, researcher, author, and resourceful educational consultant with a background in the physical and social sciences. She has garnered work experience in the health, education, and consulting sectors over the last 25 years. Her passion lies in empowering young people through academics and life skills; a passion that led her to undertake a master's degree in Career Development at Nottingham Trent University, UK, to enable her to enhance her career planning, development, and counseling skills for teenagers, and adults in and out of schools. She earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in physics and information science, respectively, from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, and her doctoral degree from the University of Zululand, South Africa. She is a member of the Chartered Institute of Personnel Management, Nigeria (CIPMN) and the Professional Editor's Guild of South Africa, both at the Associate level. She is a professional career practitioner at the Career Development Institute (CDI), UK. She is currently the Postgraduate and International Students Employability Project Officer at Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham, UK. Her research and teaching interests include information management, information systems, knowledge management, and enhancing the employability of individuals. Her research publications can be accessed at: <https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=9T-V1aUAAAJ&hl=en>.

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# Which Way Information Seeking Behaviour as a Research Area in the Library and Information Science Field? An Informetric Study

Omwoyo Bosire Onyancha

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## Abstract

This study delves into the evolution and current state of information-seeking behavior research within the field of Library and Information Science (LIS). Through an informetric approach, the study traces the trajectory of this research area from 1961 to 2023, examining publication trends, mapping author-supplied keywords, and assessing its dispersion across different disciplines. The findings reveal a consistent pattern of exponential growth in publications, reflecting the enduring relevance and vitality of information-seeking and behaviour research. Despite recent debates questioning its significance, the study underscores the interdisciplinary nature of this field and its integral role in understanding how individuals interact with information in diverse contexts. Furthermore, it highlights the impact of technological advancements, societal changes, and emerging research priorities on shaping the trajectory of information-seeking behaviour research. By integrating perspectives from psychology, sociology, computer science, and other disciplines, researchers continue to advance knowledge in this area, addressing contemporary challenges such as information overload and misinformation. The study emphasizes the continued importance of information-seeking and behaviour research in informing practice, policy, and the design of information systems in the digital age.

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**Keywords**

Information seeking • Information seeking behaviour • Information behaviour • Research • Disciplinary evolution • Library and information science • Informetrics

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## 1 Introduction

Library and Information Science (LIS) scholars have long studied information seeking behaviour, a foundational area of research essential for understanding how individuals, groups, and organizations access, evaluate, and use information in various contexts (Pongodi & Santhi, 2017). The subject area is one of the long-standing and foundational subjects taught in many LIS schools worldwide (see Dobreski et al., 2021). Information-seeking is defined as “purposive acquisition of information from selected information carriers” (Johnson as cited in Pongodi & Santhi, 2017: 838) and encompasses a broad range of topics, including information behaviour, user experience, information retrieval systems, and human–computer interaction, among others. According to Pongodi and Santhi (2017), four interrelated concepts constitute information-seeking, namely information behaviour, information-seeking behaviour, information search behaviour, and information use behaviour. In turn, Wilson (1999) defines information-seeking behaviour as

“the totality of human behaviour in relation to sources and channels of information including both active and passive information seeking and information use. Thus, it includes face-to-face communication with others, as well as the passive reception of information as in, for example watching television advertisement without any intention to act on the information given (see Pongodi & Santhi, 2017: 838).

In terms of research, scholars explore new methodologies, theories, and frameworks to deepen the understanding of how people search for and make sense of information in different contexts. In its classification scheme of the research areas within LIS, the Association for Library and Information Education (ALISE) identifies *information seeking*, *information needs*, and *information use* among the processes and systems that examine the dissemination and use of information. Furthermore, in terms of *retrieval*, ALISE classifies *cross-language information retrieval*, *interactive information retrieval*, and *multimedia information retrieval* as part of the processes and systems to effectively represent and organize and retrieve information. It is worth mentioning that *information seeking* has long been associated with *information retrieval*; several papers have been published, and academic courses have been named using the two concepts (see, for example, Chowdhury et al., 2014; Farokhzadian et al., 2015; Narayan, 2012).

Recent debates within the LIS community have, however, questioned the continued relevance and vitality of information-seeking behaviour as a research area. The discussion surrounding the perceived saturation or deprecation of information-seeking behaviour

research in LIS research has taken centre stage in some scientific conferences. For example, at the recently organized conferences such as those organized by the Department of Information Studies at the University of Zululand, South Africa in the last two or so years, senior researchers have raised doubts about the wisdom of further investing in research on information seeking and behaviour, arguing that the topic has been extensively studied, perhaps even to the point of saturation. The arguments revolved around the following points: (a) the topic has reached a point where significant contributions have been made, and further research may yield diminishing returns or lack novelty; (b) the topic is no longer considered relevant or of current interest within the academic community; and (c) the topic is deemed outdated or superseded by newer research priorities.

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## 2 Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the evolution of ‘information-seeking’ research to answer the main research question: which way the information seeking behaviour as a research area in the library and information science field? Furthermore, the study attempts to ascertain the continued relevance and vitality of the research area in the library and information science field. Specifically, the study sought to:

- Examine the trend of publication of ‘information seeking behaviour’ research between 1961 and 2023.
- Map the author-supplied keywords to examine the evolution of the concept of information seeking behaviour from 1961 to 2023.
- Determine the dispersion of the information-seeking and behaviour literature in different disciplines.

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## 3 Research Methodology

This study systematically analysed the literature on information seeking and behaviour research from 1961 to 2023 using an informetric approach. Informetrics is a research method focusing on quantitative information analysis and its dissemination. It involves the application of mathematical and statistical methods to measure various aspects of information production, dissemination, and use. Informetric encompasses bibliometrics, scientometrics, and other related disciplines, aiming to understand patterns and dynamics in the flow of information within scholarly communication and other domains. The methodology involved data collection from the Scopus bibliographic and citation database, followed by data analysis using the Vos Viewer software.

We utilized the advanced search platform within Scopus to collect relevant data, including variations of the keywords “information seeking” and “information behaviour” using

the OR Boolean operator. The initial search indicated that the earliest published article that contained any of the two search terms in the title, abstract or keyword was published in 1961, hence the limiting of the search from 1961 to 2023, the latter period being the last complete year of publication prior to the conduct of the current study. The search was limited to journal articles to focus on peer-reviewed research. The bibliographic information of the identified articles was extracted from Scopus, including article titles, authors, publication years, and author-supplied keywords. Scopus is a comprehensive bibliographic database that covers a wide range of scholarly literature across various disciplines. It includes peer-reviewed journals, conference proceedings, and patents, providing extensive coverage of scientific and academic research. Scopus offers advanced search capabilities, citation analysis tools, and metrics to evaluate the impact of scholarly publications. It is widely used by researchers, academics, and institutions for literature reviews, citation analysis, and tracking research trends. With its extensive coverage and robust features, Scopus is a valuable resource for accessing and analysing scholarly information.

The exported data in.csv format was imported into the VosViewer software for analysis. Vos Viewer is a widely used tool for bibliometric analysis and visualization, particularly suited for mapping networks of author-supplied keywords. We generated maps and networks of author-supplied keywords for four distinct periods: 1961–1990, 1991–2000, 2001–2010, and 2011–2023, capturing the evolution of information seeking behaviour research over time. Using Vos Viewer, we examined changes and trends in author-supplied keywords across the selected time periods, identifying key themes, recurring concepts, and shifts in emphasis or focus. Vos Viewer provided visualization tools to represent keyword networks in a graphical format, aiding in understanding the interconnectedness of different themes within the literature. Findings from Vos Viewer were interpreted to discern patterns and developments in information seeking and behaviour research. Comparing keyword networks across time periods provided insights into the evolution of the field, including emerging topics and changing research emphases (Fig. 1).

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## 4 Results

This section presents the findings of the study under the following three headings:

- Trend of publication of information seeking and behaviour research, 1961–2023
- Evolution of information seeking and behaviour research, 1961–2023
- Subject-orientation of information seeking and behaviour research, 1961–2023.

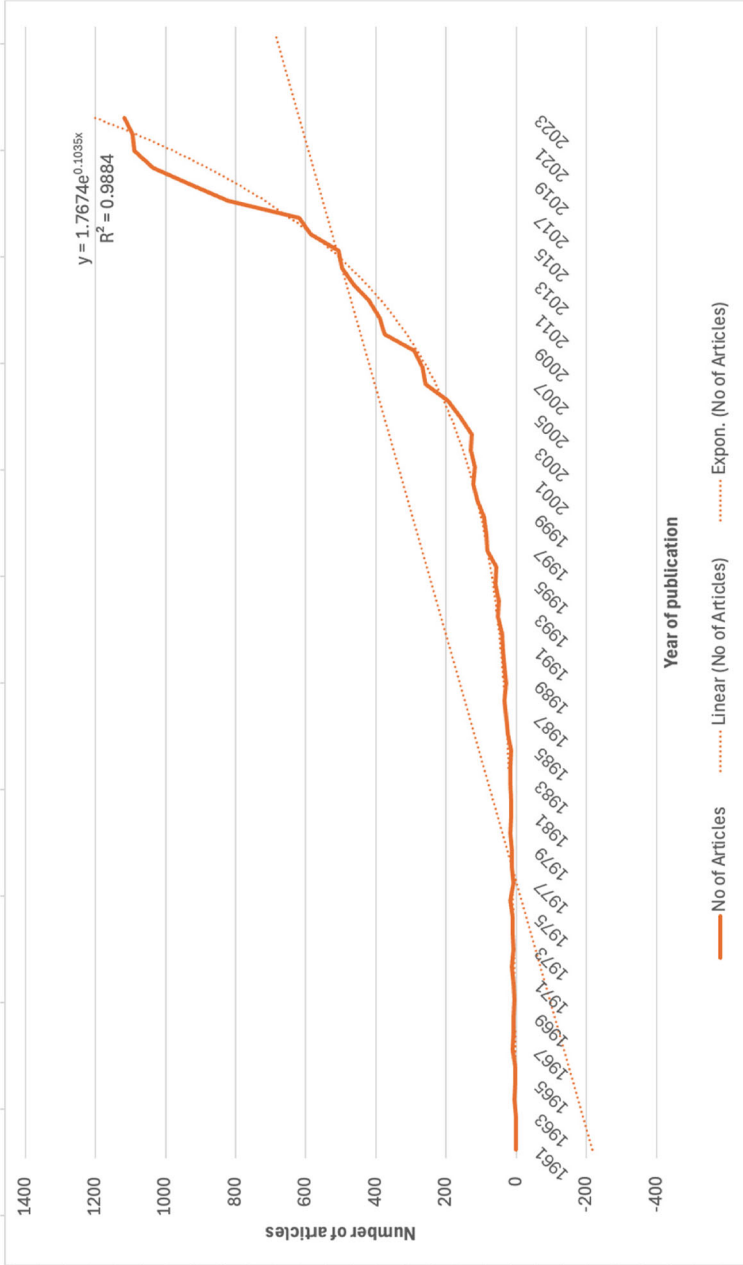


Fig. 1 Trend of publication of information seeking behaviour research, 1961–2023