# INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOUR AND DISSEMINATION BY THE LEADERSHIP OF COSATU AFFILIATED UNIONS IN THE UMGUNGUNDLOVU DISTRICT

by

## AYANDA MDLETSHE

*(BA. Social Sciences, PGDIS and BA Hons Lib)*

**Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of**

**Master of Information Studies (MIS) in the Information Studies Programme, School of Social Sciences, College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg**

**SUPERVISORS: Mr Athol Leach**

**and**

**Mr Siyanda Kheswa**

**2017**

# DECLARATION

1. The research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research.
2. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
3. This thesis does not contain other person`s data, picture, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
4. This thesis does not contain other persons` writing unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers. Where other written sources have been quoted, then:
   a) Their words have been re-written but the general information attributed to them has been referenced
   b) Where their exact words have been used, then their writing has been placed in italics and inside quotation marks and referenced.
5. This thesis does not contain text, graphics or tables copied and pasted from the internet, unless specifically acknowledged, and the source being detailed in the thesis and in the References sections.

Signature: ……………………………………….
Date: ……………………………………….

# <u>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</u>

## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my late grannies D.T. Nzuza, M.N. Nzuza, and to my late mother Zanele and Phumzile Nzuza who have supported me until their last breath on this earth, while I was studying. I also dedicate it to the Mtshali family, Nonhlanhla and Bongani, I salute you.

**Abstract**

The purpose of the study was to identify and get a better understanding of the crucial aspects of information seeking behaviour and information dissemination by the leadership of unions affiliated to the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and by so doing, assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the mechanisms employed by these unions and the challenges associated with utilising these mechanisms.

The researcher undertook a post-positivist approach. In this approach both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection were used. Instruments used for data collection in terms of quantitative data were questionnaires with open and closed questions, while in terms of qualitative data, semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted. A sample size of 120 union leaders was surveyed from 12 affiliates. Three unions withdrew from the study and nine remained comprising 90 surveyed union leaders. A total of 71 respondents from the 90 surveyed union leaders participated giving a response rate of 78.8%. A total of 18 respondents were interviewed, two from each of the nine union. The validity and reliability of the instruments were established by pre-testing the questionnaires on former union leaders in Pietermaritzburg. The quantitative data was analysed using SPSS and the qualitative data using thematic content analysis. The theoretical framework for the study was provided by Wilson's (1999) Model of Information Behaviour.

The outcome of the study shows that respondents across the nine unions required information when dealing with dismissal cases, workers benefits, retrenchment and workers' rights. The most used sources of information by union leaders included Employment legislation, the Department of Labour, upper structure leaders, and the Union secretary. The print format was the most preferred format.

Lack of information accessibility, information disorganization and information not being updated were identified as major challenges that affected the union leaders' ability to acquire information that they needed. In terms of information provision, the most used mechanisms to provide information to members were face-to-face communication, Union Secretary reports and television. Lastly, the study reported on the types of information

provided by union leadership, which were identified as follows: wage increments, congress resolutions, job advertisements and union campaigns.

Recommendations relating to information behaviour and dissemination of union leaders were made. Recommendations included the need for union leaders to be given enough time and be supported with enough information resources to respond to the information needs of their own and of their members and the need for more attention to be given to the use of social media networks as an efficient and effective information dissemination mechanism.

# Table of contents

ix

## List of Tables

## List of Figures

# List of Appendices

# Abbreviations

**ANC-** African National Congress

**CCMA**- Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration

**CEPPWAWU-** Chemical, Energy, Paper, Printing, Wood and Allied Workers Union

**CWU-** Communications Workers Union

**COSATU-** Congress of South African Trade Unions

**COSATU CEC**- Congress of South African Trade Unions Central Executive Committee

**DENOSA-** Democratic Nursing Organization of South Africa

**DOL-** Department of Labour

**FAWU-** Food and Allied Workers Union

**ILO-** International Labour Organization

**ITCU-** International Trade Confederation Union

**LRAA**- Labour Relations Amendments Act

**NALEDI-** National Labour and Economic Development Institute

**NEDLAC-** National Economic Development and Labour Council

**NEHAWU –** National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union

**NUM-** National Union of Mineworkers

**NUMSA-** National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa

**OATUU**- Organization of African Trade Union Unity

**POPCRU-** Police and Prison Civil Rights Union

**SACCAWU-** South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union

**SACP-** South African Communist Party

**SACTWU-** South African Clothing and Textile Workers Union

**SADTU-** South African Democratic Teachers Union

**SAMWU-** South African Municipal Workers Union

**SANCO-** South African National Civic Organization

**SATAWU-** South African Transport and Allied Workers Union

**SPSS-** Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

**UKZN-** University of KwaZulu-Natal

## Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.0 Introduction

Information needs differ from place to place and effective information provision is essential in addressing these needs (Kularante 1997: 117). According to Kamba (1997), "the provision of information services in Africa has been dispersed and access to various information services has been more difficult". Both of these sentiments shared by Kularante and Kamba help in establishing the research topic on information seeking and information dissemination by the leadership of unions affiliated to the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU).

South Africa is one of the countries that appreciates the existence of labour movements (also referred to as trade unions) nation-wide. The South African government has enacted various laws and policies that recognize all trade unions that are registered through the Department of Labour and by so doing, has created an atmosphere that allows trade unions to contribute to bettering the lives of people in the country. Statistics South Africa (2013) recorded that membership of the unionized workers represented about 25 percent of the total number of people who are employed in South Africa. According to Statistics South Africa in their *National and provincial labour market report* (2015), "young woman from the black African population group are the most vulnerable in the South African labour market. Their unemployment rate at 42-46% each year over the period of 2008-2015 is substantially higher than that of black African male youth (30-37%)". This sentiment is also observed in the COSATU gender policy of 2008, which highlighted that COSATU members and leadership structures were predominantly male. Taking into account the above mentioned reports, it is evident that most youth who are unionized are male and thus males are afforded the opportunity to rise within the ranks of the labour unions' leadership structures and more notably in COSATU as the biggest labour federation in South Africa.

According to the *Labour relations handbook* (2014), there has been a steady growth of union membership, which grew from 2.7 million in 1995 to 3.4 million between the years 1999 to 2013. In terms of the number of unions it was approximated that there were 194 unions in South Africa in 1992. This number grew to 334 in 1996 and 499 in 1999. Surprisingly, at present the number of recognized unions stands at 189 (*South African*

*labour guide* 2016). This indicates a drop of 310 registered unions, which leaves the question of what happened to these unions and its members. Moreover, the above figures are worrying, given the value of union contributions during the struggle to improve the socio-economic conditions of the working class in South Africa.

The role of trade or labour unions in advancing the interests of the millions of workers in South Africa has been recognized in both the private and public sectors. In order to perform their role, trade unions need access to resources including information. COSATU is a key role player in the South African labour movement for the advancement of the labour struggle agenda on behalf of the majority of South African employees. COSATU is the biggest organization in civil society after faith based organizations, with a total of 21 member unions it contributes to both the political and economic struggle of workers. It continues to be an important driver for change to South African legislation through the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC) (*Labour relations handbook* 2014). In recent times, COSATU`s strength has been observed (*Labour relations handbook* 2014) in the new enactments of Employment Equity Amendment Act 47 of 2013 and Basic Conditions of Employment Amendment Act 20 of 2013 and as well as the changes in the Labour Relations Amendments Act − 66 of 1995 as amended in 2015 (LRAA no 6 of 2014).

It remains a concern that despite the efforts made by this trade union, it is an inarguable fact that the federation remains with the responsibility to recruit more of the workers as many workers are yet to be unionized. It has been observed in recent years that the federation has been faced with numerous internal and external challenges which may have contributed negatively to the unionization of workers. These challenges included infighting among the COSATU national level office bearers and the issue of National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa (NUMSA) expanding its scope of operation, which saw some of the affiliates taking the matter to the highest decision body of COSATU, the Central Executive Committee (CEC) and subsequent to that a suspension of both Zwelinzima Vavi (now the former Secretary General of COSATU) and NUMSA (Munusamy 2015). Looking at other challenges, COSATU believes in a united and organized labour force, where all workers have a voice in both economic and political structures. However, COSATU remains a male-dominated organization, despite having a sizeable portion of women members (Vavi 2005).

According to Vavi (2005) "COSATU has a potential to form the bulwark of a mass women's movement. It is an ongoing challenge to translate the mass participation of women into an organic force that can pursue women's demands in the workplace and in society". This has not only affected COSATU as a union federation but society and the general problem of gender parity is not yet fully achieved throughout the country.

This introductory chapter discusses the background of the study, the research problem, definition of terms, the rationale of the study, the key research questions and the limitations and delimitations of the study. Lastly the theoretical framework adopted by the study is discussed and a brief description of the methodology employed is given.

## 1.1 Background of the study

As noted above, this study focused on information seeking and dissemination by the leadership of unions affiliated to COSATU in the UMgungundlovu District. The UMgungundlovu District is made up of seven local municipalities (Msunduzi, Umshwathi, Impendle, Umngeni, Mpofana, Richmond, and Umkhabathini), which make the district the second largest in the KwaZulu-Natal province with a population of 1 017 763. The District is one of the 10 district municipalities in the province of KwaZulu-Natal and is surrounded by Ilembe, Umzinyanthi, UThukela, Ugu, Harry Gwala, and Ethekwini Metropolitan. UMgungundlovu District covers an area of 9189.53 square kilometres (UMgungundlovu District Municipality Annual Report 2015). The leadership and general membership of COSATU and its affiliated unions at a district level also form part of this population.

Also as noted above COSATU is the largest trade union federation in South Africa. It was formed in 1985 with over 33 trade unions, consisting of approximately 500 000 workers with membership paid (11th National Congress Secretariat Report 2012). According to the 12th National Congress Secretariat Report (2015), COSATU stands at a declared membership of 1.9 million from 21 affiliates with an aim to increase the membership by 10 percent every year. The 12th Secretariat Report (2015) observed that "COSATU is a trade union movement which has been built over the past 30 years, based on the traditions of strong shop floor organization and militant struggles for workers' rights, collective bargaining and power; activism, democratic organization controlled by workers and based on campaigns and mobilization". COSATU adheres to the principles of a non-racial, non-

sexist and democratic South Africa (COSATU Constitution 2006). In addition, COSATU is also a member of the tripartite alliance with both the African National Congress (ANC) and South African Communists Party (SACP). The South African National Civic Organization (SANCO) became the last to join in the tripartite alliance. This means that SANCO is the fourth member in the alliance.

In terms of the organization of unions in the UMgungundlovu District, the study noted that there were 12 COSATU affiliates that existed in this district, which were operational at a branch and regional level. These affiliates were:

- National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union (NEHAWU)
- South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU)
- Chemical, Energy, Paper, Printing, Wood and Allied Workers Union (CEPPWAWU)
- Food and Allied Workers Union (FAWU)
- Communication Workers Union (CWU)
- National Union of Mine Workers (NUM)
- South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union (SACCAWU)
- Police and Prison Civil Rights Union (POPCRU)
- South African Clothing and Textile Workers Union (SACTWU)
- Democratic Nursing Organization of South Africa (DENOSA)
- South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) and
- South Africa Transport and Allied Workers Union (SATAWU).

The leadership of the affiliates exist at the regional level and local level (branches). At the time of the study (2015) some of the affiliates were still yet to be operational since they did not have offices which were accessible to not only workers but also to researchers and the general public who may be keen to join the union or do research. These affiliates were DENOSA, NUM and POPCRU whose offices were located in Durban. This made it difficult to incorporate the three unions in this study as their offices were not available within the geographical parameters of the study. It must be noted that the National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa (NUMSA) was added on the basis that the study began before NUMSA was expelled and due to the fact that the developments at the time were

amongst the reasons why the study was conducted. They, as mentioned in the Introduction above, triggered some of the questions asked in the study.

It is the view of the researcher that most organizations, including labour unions, value having access to information that is in their interests. This is evidenced by the role information plays in matters that affect the members and workers in general. Information plays a role in addressing matters affecting members like dismissal cases, workers` rights where rights are infringed and bettering the understanding of members about the role of union movements in the country. Information also helps the general public who may be keen to join unions to know better about the role of the unions in a country`s socio-economic issues. Information further contributes to the power of the union in dealing with socio-political issues to better address or provide informed solutions. Therefore, information in the context of a union, equates to both power and influence.

The influence of labour unions varies from country to country in both private and public sectors. Labour unions have made an impact in the politics and economy of countries like China, Germany, Spain and South Africa in particular (Garcia-Molina, Koutrika, and Parameswaran 2011: 283). To consolidate their influence and power and thus effectively represent their members, labour unions require certain privileges, which include access to employers and access to information (Coetzee and Kelly 2013). It then becomes their responsibility to equip themselves with relevant information which must be organized, disseminated and made accessible for the benefit of the entire membership. However, such information must also be used, managed and disseminated at the right time and at the right place to be effective. As the International Labour Organization (ILO) (2011) puts it, "trade unions need to develop their own information dissemination. It is important that trade unions establish their role as important institutions in the labour market, helping to regulate wages and salaries. They should be seen as part of the national interest representing the broad masses of the people".

It is in the researcher's opinion that the leadership of unions use information to effect decisions and actions to better the conditions of work places and to fight for workers' rights by "advancing or opposing any law, action or policy of any authority or body affecting the interests of affiliates in particular, or the working class in general" (COSATU Constitution

2006). The 2006 COSATU Constitution refers to the organization as a means to "facilitate[e] and co-ordinate[e] education and training of all workers so as to further the interests of the working class." Both these quotes underscore the importance of information in giving effect to these aims, particularly with regard to education and training. As a federation with its affiliated unions, COSATU also takes its own initiative with regards to information by "conducting, coordinating and publishing research into matters affecting workers" (COSATU Constitution 2006).

Given the above, the questions, which needed to be asked (and which this study addressed) were: how does the leadership of affiliated unions get the necessary information on issues affecting them and how do they disseminate this information to members? A further question, which also needed to be addressed was what the information needs of union leadership are? This latter question needed to be answered before addressing the questions of information seeking and dissemination. A further question that needed to be asked (and answered) was how effective and efficient are the information dissemination mechanisms used by the leadership to address membership needs?

The concepts of information needs, information seeking behaviour and information dissemination have been debated and investigated across a number of disciplines in various contexts (Case 2007: 8). However, there appears to be little literature dealing with these concepts in the context of labour unions and especially in the Southern African region and South Africa in particular. Stilwell (2010) in her preliminary exploration and bibliography of research into information behaviour in the South African context made no mention of research relating to trade unions or their members. Information, as earlier mentioned, is of crucial importance to labour unions and it is in light of this and the gap in the literature, that this study investigated information seeking and information dissemination of the leadership of COSATU affiliated unions in the UMgungundlovu District.

### 1.1.1 Research problem statement

Despite the political emancipation in South Africa which came into effect after the democratic elections in 1994, South Africa is faced with ongoing global challenges which have affected the country's economy and taken the union movement such as COSATU aback. According to Manamela (2015: 3), employment issues (with high rates of retrenchment and unemployment) have affected the role of unions like COSATU to recruit more members. As the union continues to lose more members (including NUMSA as an affiliate) the question of its capacity as a social movement of influence and independence is at stake and requires attention. These questions and developments concerning COSATU, in the opinion of the researcher, raised much needed attention on how it handles important information about issues that affect it and all its affiliates. More questions were raised on how important information, such as, for example, information relating to the disciplinary measures issued to NUMSA and former Secretary General Vavi, is made available to members and affiliates. Lastly, and importantly in terms of the present study, how the affiliates concerned were able to provide such information to their respective members and the challenges in acquiring and disseminating such information.

It is worth mentioning that this study commenced before the expulsion of NUMSA, the biggest affiliate of COSATU and the former COSATU Secretary General, Zwelinzima Vavi. Therefore, it is not the aim of the study to discuss the circumstances and details concerning the expulsion of NUMSA and Vavi. However, the study acknowledged the developments that had taken place late in the year 2015 within the federation and as will be outlined in the chapter, the NUMSA issue provided a basis for some of the questions posed in the study. The study has also taken into consideration the resolutions of the 12th National Congress of COSATU, which affirmed the decisions made by the CEC of COSATU, which included the expulsion of both NUMSA and Vavi.

It is undeniable that information plays a crucial role in the functioning of any organization and it is in the above context that the study sought to examine the information seeking behaviour and information dissemination practices of leaders of COSATU affiliated unions.

## 1.2    Aim of the study and key questions asked

The aim of the study was to investigate the information seeking and the mechanisms employed to disseminate information by the leadership of COSATU affiliated unions in the UMgungundlovu District.  In order to achieve the aim the following key questions were asked:

a)  What are the information needs of the leadership of COSATU affiliated labour unions?

b)  How do they (the leadership) obtain the information related to their needs?

c)  What is the information they disseminate to union members?

d)  How do they disseminate that information to union members?

e)  What are the problems they experience in obtaining and disseminating the information?

## 1.3    Rationale for the study

Labour unions have the task of dealing with the issues that relate to and affect their constituencies such as training, education, actions and policies. In doing so, information acquisition and dissemination plays an important role. In terms of policy formulation and decision making, valid information and information communication are paramount to the leadership as they have a significant impact on their actions and on the decisions of the unions. This study was therefore considered important as it sought to contribute to the little literature that exists on information seeking and information dissemination among the leadership of labour unions. In addition it would help the researcher to gain more insight into the type of information needs and information sources used by the leadership of unions affiliated to COSATU and the factors that influence their needs and selection of information sources. The important question of how that information was subsequently disseminated to union membership would also be responded to. An understanding of the information needs and information seeking of union leadership and the mechanisms that they use to disseminate information to their membership could inform ways to improve such seeking and dissemination practices, arguably not only for the leadership and members themselves but for the union as a whole.

The insights and findings emerging from the study could be of interest to labour unions in general and to the leadership of COSATU affiliated unions in particular as information is always important to them in effecting organizational policies and decisions.

## 1.4 Broader contextual issues

The broader issues in relation to the study, which were considered important were information communication technologies (ICTs), information management systems and security. In terms of ICTs the question arose whether these were understood and used by organizations in meeting their own goals. There was a need to look at the aspects of ICTs in a broad sense and the role they could play in information seeking and dissemination within the labour unions. There was also a need to look at ICTs role in organizations to assist in addressing issues of information management. Security measures as they relate to ICTs and information within organizations was another broad issue discussed, given that information is seen as a strategic resource and its security is of concerns to organizations such as labour unions.

## 1.5 Limitations and delimitations

Limitations are restrictions that may be imposed on the study. These restrictions may come as a result of internal and external factors (Ikoja-Odongo 2002: 21) and are something which the researcher has no control over. Delimitations are those characteristics that limit the scope and define the boundaries of the study (Simon 2011: 2) and are indeed under the control of the researcher. COSATU is the biggest federation in South Africa with 21 affiliates. The federation`s operational offices are found in many areas around the country. In the province of KwaZulu-Natal where UMgungundlovu District is situated, there were 12 COSATU affiliates partaking in the study. However, three of these affiliated unions had no offices within the area delineated for the study. This was considered as an exclusion factor and uncontrollable limitation of study.

On delimitations, the study focussed on union leadership from the COSATU affiliates that exist in UMgungundlovu. Leadership included local or branch leadership, shop stewards, regional leadership and office bearers. The reason for focusing on leadership was that leadership is exposed to various sources of information and it plays a pivotal role in aspects

of the information cycle from the creation, management, storage and dissemination to the destruction of information. However, it was important also to consider that the study had time considerations and limited finance which precluded addressing the information needs and seeking behaviour of the general membership or from extending the study to include regions other than UMgungundlovu. Findings, however, will point to what the information needs of the general membership could be, and the mechanisms employed to disseminate information to this group.

## 1.6    Definition of important terms

The key terms used in this dissertation are defined in this section.

### 1.6.1    Information

There is no common understanding of information as a term and at some point it is misinterpreted with other terms like knowledge (Lwoga, Ngulube and Stilwell 2012: 1). Poole (1985, 102 in Leach 1999: 74) refers to information as a "concept with many forms whose meaning is idiosyncratic and situational". According to Joia (2000: 69) information is "is understood as a message, usually having the format of a document or visual and or audible message". It is processed data which has meaning, purpose and relevance (Lwogo, Ngubube and Stilwell 2012: 127). It is worth mentioning that there is no single correct definition of information. The discussion of information as Okoja-Odonga (2002) pointed out is far from being achieved as human beings are divided between those who have it (information rich) and those who do not have it (information poor). Those who are information poor being in the streamline of information poverty (those that are deprived of information). In this study information is defined as "ideas, imaginative works of the mind and data of value that is potentially useful in decision making, questioning, answering, and problem solving" (Kaniki 1989: 19).

### 1.6.2    Information need

Case (2007: 333) states that, information need is an imaginative state that develops when an individual seeks for a comfortable state of knowledge from the previous state of knowledge. In this study, information need as defined by Kaniki (1989: 19), is the state of lack of a desirable requisite or commodity (namely, information) necessary to deal with a situation,

as an individual sees fit. Information needs appear to be influenced by a number of factors such as work type, facilities, problems, and position of an individual in a work environment (Leckie 2002). The identification of information needs vary with research methods applicable to a study. As Ikoja-Odongo (2002) put it; "other researchers have identified these methods as a survey method, observation method, experimental, critical incident and analysis of documented information sources."

### 1.6.3   Information seeking behaviour

Information seeking behaviour as defined by Fourie (2002: 51) refers to the variety of methods people use to discover and gain access to information resources. Ojiambo pointed out that information seeking behaviour is a constructive process, which an individual takes to satisfy an information need. Wilson (2000: 49) defined information seeking behaviour as

the purposive seeking for information as a consequence of a need to satisfy some goal. In the course of seeking, the individual may interact with manual information systems, (such as a newspaper or a library) or with computer based systems (such as the World Wide Web).

However, as this process unfolds the individual is faced with obstructing or contributing factors, which may help or deter the individual in addressing the information need. These factors include the information sources available, and where the information source is unreliable in the quality and accuracy of the information delivered (Wilson 2000: 561). In this study, information seeking is a form of human behaviour that encompasses pursuing information by means of the active examination of information sources or information retrieval systems in order to satisfy the information need, or to solve a problem (Ingwersen and Järvelin 2005: 386).

### 1.6.4   Information dissemination

The concept of information dissemination can be used to incorporate issues like the use of manual and computerized information systems and information services that are used to make relevant information accessible to people. Leach (1999: 74) chose the term provision, to indicate how information is transmitted, transferred, or communicated in acceptable formats. In this study information dissemination incorporates how information is put across or made available and the mechanisms to do so used by the leadership of affiliated labour

unions. There are factors that may affect the provision of information to the people. Leach (1999: 161) raised the question of the "best format" to be used in providing the information that is required by people in rural areas. There is a need for information provision to be presented in an acceptable format that is usable and accessible to the people concerned. Ikoja-Odongo (2002) pointed out that although information can be available if it is not easily processed, consumers cannot use it. Therefore presenting information is not enough. There must be effective methods to process the information as well.

### 1.6.5   Labour unions

 "Labour Unions also known as Trade Unions, which are the associations of labourers in a particular trade, industry, or company, are created for the purpose of securing improvements in pay, benefits, working conditions, or social and political status through collective bargaining" (Encyclopaedia Britannica Online 2014). In this study labour unions or trade unions are groups of workers organized in a registered organization recognized by the Labour Relations Act of 2002 or by the Department of Labour in which labour unions and COSATU in particular are recognized.

### 1.6.6   Labour leadership

There seems no single correct definition of the concept of union or labour leadership. Some authors define union leadership in different contexts. But what is leadership? The research approaches to the concept are broadly outlined in terms of the characteristics of a leader, a follower, and the situation (Yukl 2003). To this end many researchers define leadership in contexts. They point out that skills like management, communication, networking, and organizational skills are important in defining a leader. Some researchers define leadership in terms of characteristics or qualities. These qualities include charisma, articulation, vocal, power and influence. Leadership can be assumed to be both formal and informal. In terms of the former it can be in the form of an assigned position or role. In terms of the latter it can be someone who is charismatic and outgoing and it is able to influence people but who does not hold a formal leadership position (Goncalves 2013).

In the context of a trade union, Chao and Lipnic (2002: 6) provide that a member is eligible to be a leader of the union if he or she is a "member in good standing". The termination of

membership delegitimizes a person to stand as a union leader. In this study union leadership was defined as members of the union that occupy formal leadership positions or roles in various structures of the organization, namely Branch Chairperson, Branch Deputy Chairperson, Branch Deputy Secretary, Branch Health and Safety, Branch Para-legal, Branch Safety and Liaison Officer, Branch Secretary, Coordinator, Organizer, Regional Administrator, Regional Chairperson, Regional Deputy Chairperson, Regional Deputy Secretary, Regional Secretary and Shop-steward. It is acknowledged that there may well be members of the union who take on informal leadership roles who would be excluded from the study.

## 1.7    Theoretical framework

Various information behaviour models exist such as Ellis's (1989) Behavioural Model for Information Retrieval System Design and Kuhlthau's (1991) Information Search Process Model. However this study adapted Wilson's (1999) Model of Information Behaviour as reflected in Figure 1 below. Both Ellis (1989) and Kuhlthau`s (1991) models are discussed below.

Case (2012: 120) defined model as "a set of related statements that explain, describe or predict phenomena in a given context". Wilson (1999) states that "models in the field of information behaviour are the statements, often in the form of diagrams, that attempt to describe an information-seeking activity, the causes and consequences of that activity or the relationship among stages in information behaviour." Concurring with Wilson, Seyama (2009: 18) pointed out that a model illustrates part of the information seeking behaviour, which may involve other people through information exchange and the information seeker. Although there are various other models that have been used in the field of information science or library science, this chapter briefly discusses the above mentioned models below.

### 1.7.1    Ellis' (1989) Information Seeking Behavioural Model

Ellis' (1989) model described various categories of information seeking activities or features namely, starting, chaining, differentiating, extracting, verifying, and ending. Ellis (1989) explains that the starting stage comprises the means employed by the user that forms part of the initial search for information.  For example, the user identifies sources that could

be used as starting points of the search. In terms of chaining, Ellis states that it takes place in two categories, backward and forward chaining. The backward chaining takes place when the pointers or references from an initial source are followed. In forward chaining the item sources point to the initial source. Differentiating the activity is systematic, the individual or user is able to filter or select information from among the sources scanned or used by noticing differences between the nature and quality of the information obtained or offered. Extracting takes place when a user systematically works through a particular source or sources in order to identify material of interest. It is a selective identification of information sources by consulting a source or sources directly or by looking at a bibliography. Verifying is explained as the checking of the accuracy of the information. Ending is the last feature, whereby information is complete and the user has obtained all the necessary required information, thus resulting in a satisfied need.

Using this model the information user must be familiar with the information source and it looks at the specific users of information. To this end the model does not acknowledge the importance of information exchange, which is an important aspect in this study in relation to information dissemination (Case 2012).

### 1.7.2 Kuhlthau's (1991) Information Seeking Behaviour Model.

Kuhlthau's (1991: 366) model provides six elements that are involved during the process of information searching, namely, initiation, selection, exploration, formulation, collection and presentation. During initiation, a person becomes aware of a lack of knowledge or understanding and feelings of uncertainty and apprehension develop. At this point the task is merely to recognize a need for information. The person may use his or her previous knowledge and experience to resolve the problem of uncertainty. At the selection stage, the individual identifies and selects the general topic to be investigated or the approach to be pursued. The feeling of uncertainty often gives way to optimism after the selection has been made and there is a readiness to begin the search (Kuhlthau 1991: 366). The third stage is exploration and during this stage the feelings of confusion, uncertainty and doubt frequently increase. The task here is to investigate information on the general topic in order to extend to personal understanding (Kuhlthau 1991: 366). The fourth stage is the formulation stage and the turning point, during which the feeling of uncertainty diminishes and confidence

increases. The fifth stage is the collection of information and, at this stage the interaction between the user and the information system functions most effectively and efficiently. At this point the task is to gather information related to the focused topic. In terms of the last stage which is presentation, feelings of relief are common with a sense of satisfaction if the search has gone well or disappointment if it has not (Kuhlthau 1991:368). In terms of the present study the biggest shortcoming of the Kuhlthau's model (as with that of Ellis) is that it is silent or does not touch on the important aspect of information exchange or information dissemination (Seyama 2009: 18). The aspect of information exchange was an important consideration in this study`s adoption of the model of Wilson.

As pointed out by Case (2012), while both Ellis' (1989) and Kuhlthau's (1991) models are universally applicable to any domain, each depicting a series of cognitive stages or behaviour through which people are thought to move as they find and evaluate information, these models make no claim to consider many of the factors and variables generally considered in information seeking research. These include the type of need, what sort of information or other help might satisfy it, the availability of resources and their characteristics. Also, as stressed above, they do not take into consideration the issue of information dissemination or exchange.

### 1.7.3  Wilson`s (1999) Model of Information Behaviour

Case (2012) pointed out that Wilson`s (1999) model as depicted in Figure 1 is more developed compared to the previously discussed models by Ellis (1989) and Kuhlthau (1991). Wilson's model attempts to explain the sequence of behaviour, by referring to relevant variables rather than merely a sequence of events.

Wilson's (1999) model exhibits the conception of information seeking, which is attributed to human beings. According to Wilson (1999) the model "locates the concepts of information need, information seeking, information exchange and information use in a flow diagram that can be seen as charting the behaviour of an individual faced with the need to find information". When explaining this model, he looked at the information seeking behaviour, which arises as a consequence of a need and how that need is subsequently satisfied or not satisfied (Wilson 1999: 251). The model suggests that information seeking

behaviour arises as a result of a need perceived by an information user (individual). In Wilson's (1999) words,

> … the information user, in satisfying the need, makes demands upon formal or informal information sources or services, which may result in success or failure to find relevant information. When the search result is positive (successful), the information user then makes use of the information found and may either fully or partially satisfy the perceived need.

Figure 1: Wilson's (1999) Model of Information Behaviour

```
                          ┌──────────────────┐
                          │ Information user  │
                          └──────────────────┘
                                   │
                                   ▼
┌──────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────┐      
│ Satisfaction or  │ ───► │     "Need"        │      
│ non-satisfaction │      └──────────────────┘      
└──────────────────┘                                 
        ▲                          │                 
        │                          ▼                 
┌──────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────┐
│ Information       │      │ Information seeking│ ──► │ Information       │
│ use              │      │ behaviour         │     │ exchange         │
└──────────────────┘      └──────────────────┘      └──────────────────┘
                           ╱              ╲                  │
                          ▼                ▼                 ▼
              ┌──────────────────┐ ┌──────────────────┐ 
              │ Demands on       │ │ Demands on other │ 
              │ information systems│ │ information sources│ 
              └──────────────────┘ └──────────────────┘ 
                      │        ╲   ╱        │      ┌──────────────────┐
                      ▼         ╳           ▼      │ Other people     │
              ┌──────────────┐      ┌──────────────┐ └──────────────────┘
              │   Success     │      │   Failure    │         ▲
              └──────────────┘      └──────────────┘         │
┌──────────────────┐                                         │
│ Information       │                                         │
│ transfer         │ ────────────────────────────────────────┘
└──────────────────┘
```
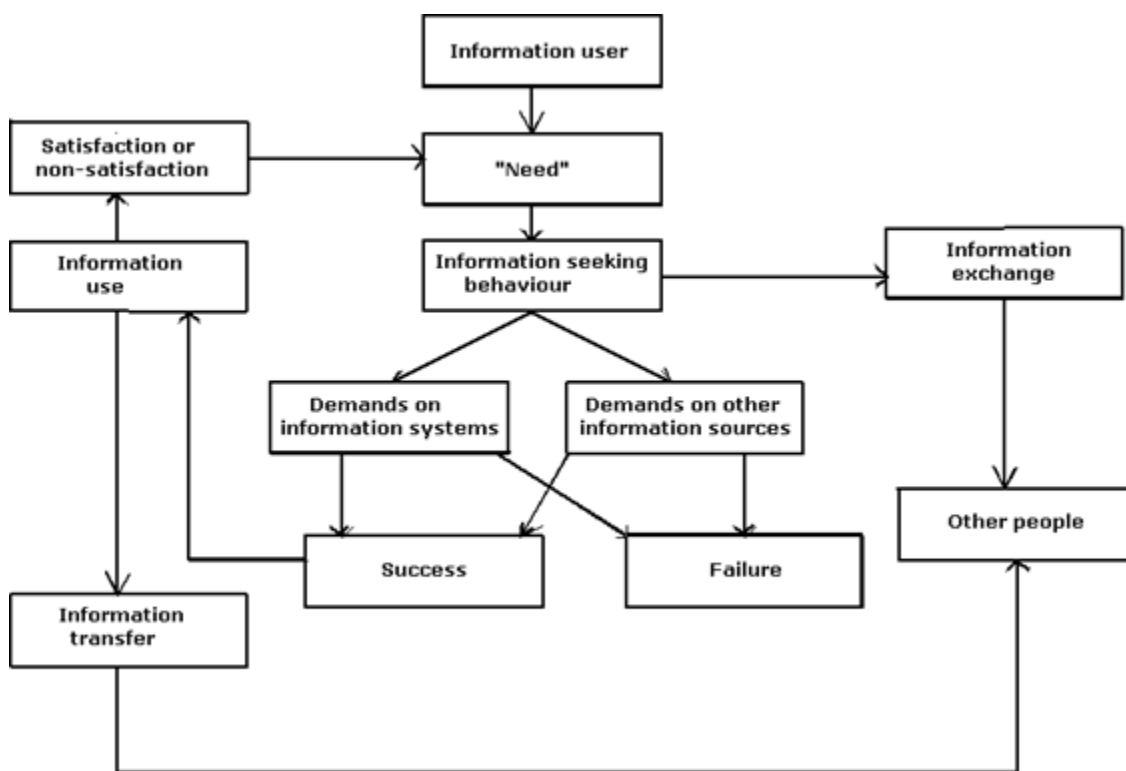
Source: Wilson (1999)

In the process of information seeking, Wilson (1999) acknowledges that while the information user is in the midst of searching and seeking for positive information, the individual is faced with other people for information exchange. It is worth mentioning that Wilson does not claim that information exchange may yield positive information. As this information exchange occurs it exposes the individual`s need to a variety of information he or she may choose from. Therefore, as the exchange of information happens, the individual uses the information that is more relevant to satisfying his or her need. However, as

exhibited in the model, the use of information by an individual in need may result in two outcomes, that is, the need may be satisfied or it may not be satisfied. This indicates that the individual was either able or not able to address the need. In Wilson's model there are two forms of successes and failures during the process of information seeking. The first one happens during the demand for information on systems or sources and the other form takes place during information use. Thus when the sources of information do not yield good results, the individual continues to engage with other forms of information sources. While at the stage of information use, if the individual is not satisfied with the information made available to address the need he or she reiterates the search process until the need has been satisfied.

A reason for choosing this model is that the model acknowledges that information seeking behaviour involves information exchange through other people. The information that is relevant to an information user may be passed or disseminated from one user to another. Furthermore, the model has been recognized as allowing both a description and explanation of a user`s information behaviour (Seyama 2009: 27). The model has also been used by various authors in their research and in the South African context in particular (Majyambere 2012: 13).

Finally, Wilson's (1999) model is applicable to this study in that it assists in addressing the key questions based on the information needs and seeking behaviour of unions` leadership. The model will assist this study in determining the context in which the information needs and information seeking behaviour of union leadership can be understood and identifying the barriers that may affect the leadership in doing so. Lastly, Wilson`s model considered many of the factors and variables generally considered in information seeking research like the type of need, what sort of information or other help might satisfy it, the availability of resources and their characteristics.

## 1.8   Methodology

This study undertook a post-positivist approach. In this approach both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection are used. This combination of two or more approaches of data collection procedures within a single study is known as methodological triangulation (Babbie and Mouton 2007: 28). The two approaches allow for more in-depth

investigation of a situation and help in the collection of data for better analysis of research questions and increase the validity of the findings (Babbie and Mouton 2001: 275). The use of instruments for data collection in terms of the quantitative data was the questionnaire which contained both open and closed questions. In terms of qualitative data, semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted with union leaders. These two instruments were appropriate for gathering the data necessary for answering the research questions. The benchmark for the inclusion and selection of the respondents was based on the role or work of each respondent, which either focused on or necessitated information provision to their respective union members. Using a purposive sampling approach the selection was done with the assistance of the union secretaries who were able to provide list of information about the union officials who met the above criteria. Nine unions were included and a sample of 90 union leaders identified, 71 of whom completed the questionnaire giving a response rate of 78.8%.

A total number of 18 respondents were interviewed (two from each affiliated union who were responsible for information and dissemination to provide in-depth information on the aspects of information seeking and dissemination role). Conducting interviews can be both a time-consuming and costly endeavour. However, using a purposive sampling with two participants from each union, the researcher was able to avoid both issues. The validity and reliability of the instruments was established by pre-testing the questionnaires on former union leaders in Pietermaritzburg. The quantitative data was analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and the qualitative data using thematic content analysis. As noted above in the theoretical framework union leadership information needs, information seeking and information provisions were identified using Wilson's (1999) model of information behaviour, which suited the group under study. The research methodology is described in detail in Chapter 3.

## 1.9    Research Outline

The study has six chapters as discussed below.

Chapter 1 provided a general introduction to the study. It provided the background of the study, research problem, and definition of terms, rationale, key research questions,

limitations and delimitations. This chapter also discussed the theoretical framework of the study and briefly described the methodology used.

Chapter 2 comprises of the literature review, which discusses the relevant literature relating to the information seeking and information dissemination of the leadership of unions.

Chapter 3 describes the research design and methodology adopted for this study. It discusses the methods, research paradigm, validity and reliability, population, sampling methods, data collection methods, data analysis and ethical clearance.

Chapter 4 presents the research results from the leadership of unions affiliated to COSATU, through both the self-administered interviews and questionnaires. In this chapter qualitative results are presented in narrative form, while quantitative results are presented using charts, tables and figures.

Chapter 5 discusses and interprets the results in terms of the relevant literature.

Chapter 6, the final chapter, provides a summary, conclusion and recommendations based on the findings and provide suggestions for further research.

## 1.10  Summary

In this introductory chapter the background of the study, its aim and its importance were provided. The key questions underpinning this study were also presented. The rationale, limitation and delimitations were outlined and the definitions of various terms relating to the study were discussed and defined. Lastly the theoretical framework underpinning the study was discussed and an outline of the research methodology used was given.

Chapter 2, which follows, is a review of the relevant literature.

## Chapter 2:  Literature Review

## 2.0 Introduction

Stilwell (2010: 2) notes that there has been a substantial increase in the number of articles and papers reporting on information behaviour in South Africa since 2000. She acknowledges that the literature on information behaviour has also been developed at different times with different approaches in various contexts and situations (Stilwell 2010: 2). However, it must be noted that there is little literature relating to the information seeking and information dissemination of the leadership of labour unions that has been identified either internationally or in South Africa. As pointed out in Chapter 1, this study seeks to provide a clearer understanding of the information seeking behaviour and the information mechanisms employed to disseminate information by the leadership of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) affiliated unions in the UMgungundlovu District.

This literature review examines the relevant research related to this study and addresses the key aspects of information seeking and information dissemination. Specifically, this review will look at what the information needs that initiate the information seeking of union leadership are and what information tools and sources used by the leadership in addressing their information needs are or could be. The review will then focus on how such information is identified and disseminated or made available to union members. As noted above, there is a dearth of literature regarding information seeking and dissemination by trade union leaders (and members as well) and as a consequence much of the literature reviewed below will not deal with unions per se, but with related studies, which should provide some insight in terms of how information needs, information seeking and information dissemination have been addressed. In order to provide a broader context concerning information seeking and dissemination the crucial aspects of the internet, information technology and information communication technology are discussed. To begin with, however, the role of trade unions and specifically that of COSATU will be discussed.

## 2.1 The role of trade unions

According to the International Labour Organization (2013), the role of trade unions is observed but not limited to the following:

- Political role, the use of collective power to influence decisions on behalf of members and society at large.
- Market role, intervention through wage bargaining and thus impacting on the economy.
- Democratizing role, create an environment that is democratic in the industry or work place.
- Service role, promote membership services by addressing membership challenges and needs.

As outlined in the previous chapter, COSATU is the biggest federation in the South African history of unions and organized workers` organizations. However, COSATU's role is extended by its affiliates to their respective members through their daily interactions with members' needs. COSATU plays various roles in South Africa. These roles include political, economic and social. COSATU played a central role in the mass democratic movement that took on the apartheid government in the 1980s, where activists and shop-stewards led community struggles (Vavi 2005). In the 1990s, COSATU also challenged the ANC's government policies including privatization and increasingly represented public-sector workers. The federation remains the "spear and the shield" of the workers struggle in South Africa (Vavi 2005). The federation plays a role in the development of communities and thus generally manifests itself by contributing to improving the living standards of employees, by negotiating not only better terms and conditions of employment and decent wages, but also other benefits such as medical, housing and pension (Vavi 2005). In furthering its influence and role, COSATU, in its 12th National Congress made declarations on the programme to mobilize workers on the implementation of minimum wages. In this National Congress, COSATU resolved to meet business leaders and government to finalize the implementation of workers national minimum wage (12th National Congress Special Declaration 2015).

To summarize the broad strategies of COSATU in the political space, it aims:

- to improve the material conditions of their members and working people as a whole;
- to organize the unorganized; and
- to ensure worker participation in the struggle for peace and democracy principles.

These strategies reflect the political and socio-economical role of COSATU to see the collective power of union members influencing the decisions in both politics and the economy of South Africa (COSATU Constitution, 2006).

The study by Mwale (2014) looked at the effectiveness of trade unions in Zambia, with reference to the various roles of unions. According to Mwale (2014), roles of union leadership ranged from training, insurance services, financial services and legal advice. Mwale (2014) stressed that the key role of the union is to promote union objectives, values and goals. He further pointed out that union leaders are responsible, while promoting the union objectives, values and goals, to organize members, and to keep members informed about union policies and related activities. However, union leaders must ensure that there is membership participation in all of its processes and meetings. This is done by listening as well as communicating information and addressing members' concerns. In doing so, the union leaders must use effective measures of information communication to keep members informed. This can be done in several ways including face-to-face, surveys and meetings and newsletters (Mwale 2014). With effective communication of information, union programmes, activities and policies are clarified and understood by every stakeholder. Lastly, Mwale (2014) provides that there are also supplementary roles that are performed by trade unions such as welfare, education and research activities, which also form part of the responsibilities of union leaders. However, to further understand their roles it is important to know the union leadership information needs.

## 2.2 The information needs of the trade union leadership

When defining information needs, Faibisoff and Ely (1976: 2) state that "information needs have become an umbrella under which a variety of interpretations fall." This view has manifested as a result of the complexity and the ever-changing nature and various contexts in which information needs have been studied. But the fundamental question here is what

are the information needs and information seeking behaviours of trade union leadership? Case (2007: 333) defines information need as an imaginative state that develops when an individual seeks for a comfortable state of knowledge from the previous state of knowledge. People want to address certain states of knowledge, and thus develop a need for information. Once this state develops, people engage in a state of seeking for information that will make sense in addressing the state of knowledge or uncertainty (Case 2012: 74-75).

Chaplan and Hertenstein's (2002) study in Illinois at Midwestern State, determined the information needs of local union officials (identified through a database from the U.S. Department of Labour files). The findings of the study indicated that the role (for example, negotiator, grievance handler, administrator and educator) of the union official determined information needs and that the type of information needed determined the type of information sources required or used. The local union officials' information needs were of two types: the institutional needs comprising information on running the business affairs of the union, contract negotiations, grievances and arbitrations, labour education programs, and organizing drives and political campaigns. The second type of need was personal and included needs such as information for promotion or certification, writing of newsletters and publications, and information to aid communication with individual members (Chaplan and Hertenstein 2002: 57). The most important aspect of the findings was that the differences that exist in terms of the information needs were caused by the different roles the members have and that the approach to information differed according to their job classification, length of service in the union office, the bargaining structure and the union structure, their perception of themselves as administrators or activists, and their personality and gender (Chaplan and Hertenstein 2002: 57).

What can be extracted from the above study is that information needs of people and trade unions in particular vary because of different factors such as level of education, sex, job roles, length of service, availability of information systems and services, awareness of the available information systems and services, access to these services and several other variables (Kaniki 2000: 8). There are thus a large number of variables or factors involved in considering the information needs of any group of persons including, as in the case of the

present study, labour union leadership. However, the question of satisfying the information need may not be well understood without undertaking a process of addressing the need.

## 2.3 Information seeking behaviour of trade union leadership

Information seeking behaviour emerges as a result of an information need, which the individual aims to satisfy. As the individual seeks to satisfy the need he or she engages in the process of information seeking to find relevant, related and definable information. A person seeks for information for various reasons. These include filling the gap of knowledge as defined by Belkin, (1980), or an inability to make sense out of a situation as Dervin (1992) explained. Information seeking becomes a process of problem solving, through problem identification, source selection, problem articulation, examination of results and extraction of information (Marchionin 1995: 158). Information seeking produces the type of sources used to address the information need. Therefore, the process of information seeking cannot be separated from the sources of information identified and used by the information seeker. As pointed out by Ikoja-Odonga (2002), information seeking behaviour probes for information on how information is accessed and how the sources are used.

Although there are no specific mechanisms that are provided by research on how union leaders go about seeking the information for their information needs in the context of COSATU and South Africa in general, according to the COSATU Constitution (2006), COSATU engages in research on fundamental topics and the information obtained assists leadership in dealing with the various needs of the organization. COSATU, as a member of the tripartite alliance with other political organizations, shares some of the important information through means of bilateral meetings. COSATU is also recognized by the Department of Labour and, as a consequence, much information on labour related issues is made available to COSATU through means of bilateral meetings and other departmental reports which are also made available to the union leaders. As noted in Chapter 1, COSATU is also a member of other allied institutions and international organizations which assist in sharing international topics of common interest (11th COSATU Congress Secretariat Report 2012). Through these alliances, information sharing between COSATU and its allies on topics such as socio-economic issues is of central importance. It is thus

imperative for the leadership to obtain such information. However, it is not clear whether such bilateral meetings and departmental reports play a significant role in providing information to the union leaders in the context of COSATU affiliates. This was something borne in mind for the present study.

Brown (1972) conducted a study on adult education among members of the North Vancouver labour unions. Her study surveyed the education and information seeking activities of 389 members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees between 1971 and 1972. Results indicated that participation in union education was found to be limited to active members and that participation in self-directed learning projects and in other information seeking activities was high (Brown 1972: 74). The problem with this study is that we cannot assume that the findings are applicable to the behaviour of the leadership of COSATU affiliated unions. Also problematic is that the study was done over 40 years ago and in the Canadian context. However, the significance of the study is that it does suggest a way (namely, the survey) to determine the information seeking behaviour of unions. It also points to the importance of education in the union and how this education could help in addressing the information needs of the union leadership in the present study.

Kaminski (2003) observed that union leadership classes help in labour education, which assisted leadership in obtaining information for their needs. Kaminski (2003) pointed out that labour education included programmes such as theories about effective leadership, personal assessments of leadership styles, updates on current "hot topics" or skills training. In Kaminski`s (2003) view, the use of good stories that relate to union leaders are easily remembered by union leaders. According to Kaminski (2003) the use of stories in topics such as "What do leaders do"? and "How can I learn to do that?" may assist union leaders in dealing with some questions that they ask or face.

What is observed from Kaminski's (2003) study and from the COSATU Secretariat Report (2012) is that, although there are various ways for the union leaders to obtain the information, the relationship between the processes of seeking and establishing the sources used must be clarified. The aspect of sources used by trade union leaders is further discussed below.

## 2.4 Sources of information used by trade union leadership

In trying to address the information needs of unions` shop-stewards, Nzimande (2012: 18) points out that sources of information like books are the best tools for shop stewards and union office bearers to be effective representatives in the union sector. This suggests that information as contained in various sources such as books, help union leaders to effectively represent their members. Ananaba (1979: 164) points out that a study conducted by the Regional Economic Research and Documentary Centre in early 1976 showed that 32 trade union journals were published by the African Trade Union, a union based in Africa representing all trade unions on the African continent, with the purpose of providing information to its members in various contexts, regarding the state of unions in Africa. Whether these journals were effective or efficient tools for information access and information dissemination is not clearly indicated or whether the information from the journals addressed the needs of leadership and members of unions is equally not clear. However, the publication of the journals does underscore the importance that was attached to print as an information source in that period. The studies above help not only in understanding various sources that are used and considered important by the union, but also how unions establish their own sources of information that help address their needs in particular.

Chaplan and Hertenstein's (2005) study examined how union officials go about satisfying their information needs with an emphasis on their use of libraries. The libraries comprised public libraries, libraries from community colleges and libraries in private and public supported universities. Questionnaires were distributed to union officials to determine the officials` use of various types of libraries, their satisfaction with their experience in using the libraries, the problems they encountered in library use and their opinion of various ways in which libraries might be made more useful to them. In addition, the questionnaires also determined the officials` training on how to find information. The total number of survey questionnaires mailed was 1,518 and responses obtained were 239.

Chaplan and Hertenstein's (2005) study found that union officials used formal sources more (including libraries of all types, research departments at international union headquarters, union publications, online databases, and the internet), compared to informal sources

(colleagues, telephone contacts, and office files) to address their information needs. Libraries were the most used source of information by those officials who had training on how to go about searching for information. On the question of how the library can be improved, most of the union officials emphasized the importance of availability of labour materials in the library.

In an earlier study Chaplan and Hertenstein (2002) looked at how union officials were trained on how to find information and the information sources they used to obtain the information for their information needs. In terms of the latter, some of the ways in which the officials satisfied their information needs and sources that were used echoed the findings in their later study and included the following: libraries, research departments at the unions, people that they knew, phoning organizations, using union publications, local union files, databases subscribed to, and the internet (Chaplan and Hertenstein 2002: 57). The findings also pointed to the need to provide training regarding the information sources to be used, namely, those that are more formal and relevant to the officials.

With regard to training, the study further found that 49 percent of the respondents had training in research and that the training had an impact on the number of information sources used - the more training that the respondent had the more information sources were used. The findings showed that local union officials preferred informal and personal sources for information needed to carry out their roles. Such sources, for example included the use of people known to union members, the use of telephonic enquiry and the use of local office files.

As noted above Chaplan and Hertenstein in their 2005 study, focused on libraries as the main information source of union officials. While this was examined in the present study it was by no means the main focus. The authors' findings relating to training in research in their earlier study (2002) are interesting ones but information seeking skills was not an issue explicitly addressed in the present study.

In the following section attention moves to union members and the sources of information they use in addressing their information needs. While the focus is not on leadership per se (as will be shown union leaders are a source of information) one could argue that union

leaders are in effect union members as well and the studies reported on below do provide further perspective and insight into sources of information used in a trade union context.

## 2.5 Sources of information used by union members

An exploratory study was conducted by Davy and Scheck (1991) to determine the effectiveness of union leaders in communicating information to their members in the context of corporate acquisitions or mergers. Their research points out that after a merger or acquisition, employees experienced a great deal of uncertainty regarding their role and their future in the new organization (Davy and Scheck 1991: 5). This uncertainty was intensified because the information provided to members was inaccurate thus making it less credible. Thus to address the uncertainty, attempts to minimize uncertainty need to be conducted. According to Davy and Scheck (1991: 5) the information provided to employees must be credible and accurate for workers. In examining whether the information is credible, they looked at information sources used during merger and acquisition processes by surveying employees in a recently merged organization.

Participants were selected randomly throughout the organization to participate voluntary in the survey. Only the production employees were represented by the union. Non-union participants included clerical staff, technicians, engineers, management and security. Both union and non-union employees were surveyed at two points in time. Out of a total population of 120 employees that were asked to participate, 80 actually participated in the first survey, which was administered in-house one month after the acquisition. The second survey in which 58 employees participated, took place four months after the merger. In these surveys the employees were asked to choose their reliable information sources. The sources which the employees were asked to choose from were: upper management, direct supervisor, union representative, newspapers, rumours from co-workers and rumours other than from co-workers and company hotlines.

Davy and Scheck (1991: 8) found that direct supervisors were the most highly rated as sources of reliable information. The supervisors were followed by upper management and newspapers. These were followed by company hotlines and there was no significant difference between the company hotline and the rumours from co-workers in terms of reliability. According to Davy and Scheck (1991) the most surprising finding of the

28

research was that union representatives were rated by the employees as the least reliable source of information. Davy and Scheck (1991: 10) point out that union representatives were disregarded by management as important communication links, thus not providing them with the necessary information which they, the union representatives, could then disseminate to their members. This resulted in the union representatives being poorly informed in comparison to other sources like newspapers and co-workers. This raises questions as to whether the relationship between the management and union representatives in the work place became an obstacle for the union in addressing information needs and information dissemination or if the union representatives themselves were not proactive enough in making information available to the other union members. Considering what has been observed earlier, this study confirmed that some of the information services and information made available by unions is considered unreliable and thus less valuable by their members.

There are certain aspects regarding the Davy and Scheck (1991) study that need to be considered. In particular the study underscores the importance of other sources that can be seen as being outside the union, which are viewed (and used) by members as reliable and valuable. This suggests that not in every instance will union members perceive union leadership or the union as key reliable sources of information for their needs. The study also underscores the importance of union leadership themselves needing to be fully informed on issues affecting members and the concomitant importance of their relationship with management in this regard.

The study by Bryson (2003) investigated the effectiveness of trade unions in delivering improved work and working conditions for employees in the United Kingdom based on the 1998 Workplace employee relations survey. The results show that employees felt that the unions were "excellent" or "good" at sharing information about employers and the workplace. Results further show that union members were more positive about the unions' role than non-members. Former members of the unions were the most critical about the role played by unions (Bryson 2003). In this study, it was further established that while the union was useful in providing information to the employees, the employees did not regard the union as a valuable source of information about employers. In this regard, instead of relying on their unions, employees relied on co-workers, printed materials, friends,

managers or supervisors for information and advice on work-related matters. There was no mention of the reason why unions were not considered a valuable source. However, when it came to advice on their rights at work specifically, the study found that employees commonly turn to their unions more along with their managers or supervisors and colleagues as a source of information. Bryson's (2003) study shows that where unions existed, information was made available and unions were considered a more reliable information source on work related advice. It does however, need to be borne in mind that the study found that not all unions and union leaders were considered reliable sources of information by their members. While their role in servicing their members was recognized not all members were satisfied with the services provided. What also emerged from the study was that not all information services from unions were considered valuable, and that some information could be made available by other entities. Bryson's (2003) study is useful since it is pointing to the importance of trade unions and their leaders as an information source for their members.

In the South African context the 11th COSATU Congress Secretariat Report (2012) outlined some of the reasons why it is necessary to disseminate information to the members of COSATU and its affiliates and the types of information involved. The Report, which explains dissemination of information in terms of the Media and Communication Unit, highlights COSATU's communication vision. The vision is to educate and mobilize the members and popularize their (the member`s) views to the wider public. COSATU conducted a *Workers' Survey* (2012) aimed at providing an objective analysis of the perceptions of union members and potential members on issues facing the labour movement. In terms of disseminating information to members, the survey found that information provided by the union to its members included topics such as negotiations between union leaders and employers, labour laws, employment equity, skills development, health and safety, political issues or political economy, gender, role of shop-stewards, workplace issues and HIV-AIDS (*Workers' Survey* 2012: 27). The Survey indicated that COSATU members were able to identify their primary source of news on political and economic information in relation to their preferred information sources. The findings of the survey showed the preferred sources of news for COSATU members were the following:

- SABC TV (58%)

- Radio (16%)
- Newspaper (12%)
- eTV (4%)
- Internet (3%)
- DSTV (1.5%)
- Friends, meetings, social media (2.5%)

In the Survey, it was also found that union workers at high income levels (earning more than R15 000 per month) tended to rely more on newspapers as well as private and web-based media while low income members (earning less than R2 500 per month) depended more on radio. It must be indicated that these particular findings were solely on the sources used for economic and political information only.

## 2.6 What information is disseminated to union members by union leaders?

The aspect of information dissemination plays a critical role for many organizations including trade unions. Information must be made available to union members in order to inform and educate. Unions, through their leadership, are responsible for giving members information on numerous issues including information about the union as an institution, about its present policies and future plans and about its relationship with the state and national or international unions. Some of this information helps union leaders to educate members about their rights under the union, how the union works to assist its members and also inform the members about the obligations of union membership (Hammer, Bayazit and Wazeter, 2009).

Morris (2002: 22) looked at trade union`s educational and training programmes as a way to equip members with necessary information. According to Morris (2002) "building trade union solidarity and membership loyalty is fundamentally linked to the provision of trade union education and training". Morris (2002) believed that the trade unions must be in a position to provide orientation particularly to new membership on the following topics:

- History and philosophy of the labour movement;
- The purpose and structure of trade unions;
- Their rights, duties and responsibilities in the workplace;

- Their union constitution and the duties and obligations of membership;

- Basic safety and health;

- Safety nets;

- Some details about the labour legislation of the country; and

- Collective bargaining.

As it has been noted (COSATU Press Statement 2015) in the recent period in South Africa, COSATU has been constantly engaging and communicating information with its members on the recent introduction of e-tolling in Gauteng Province.

## 2.7 How do unions disseminate information to union members?

In relation to studies of information dissemination one respondent in Leach's (1999: 82) study stated that "the communities are very dynamic you need all sorts of information provision tactics to get them". While Leach (1999) investigated the provision of information to adults in rural KwaZulu-Natal by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) his findings do provide some insights into mechanisms used to disseminate information to adults. His study used a descriptive survey and interviews were used to collect data. Interviews were held with a range of NGOs working with adults in rural areas and whose work involved the dissemination of information. Twenty two interviews were held with representatives from 20 NGOs. His findings established that a wide range of mechanisms were used to provide information including oral through one-on-one communication and workshops, the use of print as well as audio-visual mechanisms such as theatre, radio and television. However, some mechanisms had certain difficulties like individual communication, which was viewed to be time-consuming by the information providers (Leach 1999: 77).

Soklic's (2004) study investigated the history of trade unions and their work looking at the internal (workers benefits at workplaces) and external changes (economical influence) of trade unions. The study also looked at the possible changes that could be implemented in the work of trade unions. Soklic (2004) found that the trade unions in Slovenia were faced with image problems as they were considered corrupt, lazy and autocratic. The study found that various aspects of unions needed to be changed including branding, mission and vision, public relations, direct marketing and advertising. According to Soklic (2004), trade unions

were responsible for making information available to their members and they made use of the following information distribution channels to get information across to their members: direct mail, newsletters, newspapers, email-messages, magazines and brochures or flyers, online-discussion groups, posters, radio announcements, television ads and web pages. According to Soklic (2004) "Trade unions information distribution channels could also be used to give information to members about the work of their party and political situation in general". Soklic (2004: 38) was of the view that the internet and web pages have a potential for wide-spread dissemination of information pointing out that they "offer increased possibilities of tracking and evaluating actions of union hierarchies and facilitate participation and training opportunities for a wider group of members".

In his study, Soklic also drew attention to cyberspaces, noting that as internet use increases and electronic forms of communication become more habitual, the union needed to adapt to these modern forms to survive. According to Soklic (2004) this means that there will be more of what he referred to as "electronic unionism", which has the potential to find a new meaning and domain of union activism and the relationship between union officials and members interaction through use of the internet (Soklic 2004: 38). This study points to the information distribution channels that may be available and thus relevant to the current study of unions in UMgungundlovu.

A study done by Dansoh (2007) investigated the provisions of information on low-cost housing (LCH) to participants in a housing project in the Tamboville community in Pietermaritzburg. A Housing Service Centre (HSC) was introduced to provide essential information on LCH to Tamboville residents. Data was collected through interviews and questionnaires from a convenience sample of 53 respondents who were homeowners of low-cost housing. Further data was collected from the Built Environment Support Group, a non-governmental organization managing the Tamboville Project. The purpose of the study was to find out what information on low-cost housing had been provided, how it had been provided and the extent to which the information assisted the homeowners in making housing decisions.

The findings revealed that only 54% respondents obtained information from the HSC. The main method use by the HSC to disseminate information was interpersonal communication.

This was supplemented by practical demonstrations, leaflets and newsletters. Just under half (48.2%) of the respondents indicated that the LCH information had assisted their decision-making. The findings also indicated that the majority of participants preferred the use of oral methods of communication, such as workshops or one-on-one interactions and visitations from government departments such as the Department of Housing and Land Affairs (Dansoh 2007: 57). Sources other than the HSC used by the respondents in getting information on low-cost housing included private organizations such as Kuphuka and Agishana (Dansoh 2007).

Given the above, it is apparent that there are various mechanisms that can be employed to disseminate information to people and that there is no one specific format that can be applicable in all contexts or situations. Whether the above mentioned mechanisms in the findings of Dansoh (2007), Soklic (2004) and Leach's (1999) studies can be effectively used by union leadership and whether there are other forms in which information can be disseminated were some of the questions to be answered by this study.

The literature does point to other mechanisms which can, arguably, be used by unions to provide information to their members and these are outlined and discussed below.

### 2.7.1 Union education and training

When defining union education, the International Labour Organization (ILO) (2007: 1) refers to functional education which is about the training of members about union operations and subject education like economics and international politics. Union education is an ongoing process which equips workers who have the potential to, or ambitions to become, union leaders and workers representatives, as they learn how to represent their co-workers in a work place. Union education has always been an important part of union`s action (International Labour Organization 2007: 1). In the South African context, labour unions do recognize the importance of worker education, which is provided through union structures. COSATU`s education structures were tasked to plan and implement COSATU`s education programme, which is championed by the National Education Committee (NEDCOM), National Educators' Forum (NEF) and Provincial Educator Forums (11th COSATU Congress Secretariat Report 2012: 61). COSATU affiliates are part of this programme, particularly the affiliate's shop stewards (11th COSATU Congress Secretariat

Report 2012: 61). However, the NEDCOM of COSATU acknowledged that the affiliates that are well resourced were able to benefit from the trade union education programme as they were able to budget for the programme (11th COSATU Congress Secretariat Report 2012: 65).

In terms of training, COSATU offers a training centre and an education resource centre, which includes written materials, audio-visuals and online materials (11th COSATU Congress Secretariat Report 2012: 66). COSATU does acknowledge that its education programme is not affordable to some affiliates (see below). Training offered covers various topics, which include labour law, negotiations, employment equity, skills development, health and safety, political economy, gender, role of shop-stewards, workplace issues, and HIV/AIDS (*Workers' Survey* 2012: 27).

Eaton and Kaminski (2003: 67) are of the view that union education is a platform for good stories, which are shared and this assists those members who have an interest in union leadership positions. Topics such as effective leadership, personal assessment of leadership styles, updates on current hot topics or skills training can be discussed in class during the education programme. Therefore a union education programme can be considered a further information dissemination mechanism, through which the information needs of the union membership can be addressed.

Although union education is provided by COSATU as mentioned above, it is acknowledged (and inferred above) that some affiliates cannot afford the programme and this has been identified as a challenge. Given this acknowledgment it is difficult to conclude that all leadership of the COSATU affiliates are assisted in addressing their information needs and that of union members with this union education programme. It is also not clear if union education and training equips the leadership of affiliates in enabling them to disseminate information to other leaders and membership in general. The challenges confronting this programme is that it cannot be assured that it is accessible to all leaders as it involves financial inputs, which some affiliates cannot afford.

In the study of Guest and Conway (2004), training was identified as one of the advantages of being a member of a union. According to Guest and Conway (2004), unionized workers, in comparison to their counterparts who were not members of a union, had more access to

training at work places, which helped them address their information and their work related needs. It was further established that where there was less training or where members were less informed about unions, employers did not recognize union operations. What was also apparent in the study was that, where unions were not recognized by employers, there was hostility towards workers from management. The study also found that unionized workers had more training needs as compared to non-unionized workers.

It is apparent that Guest and Conway's (2004) study link information dissemination to that of the training offered by unions in providing information to union members. Moreover, the study also assessed the effectiveness of this training in providing information to union members by comparing with workers who were not unionized. What is important about this study is that it points to the use of training to provide information to members of unions who thus have more access to information which in turn helps them to address their information needs.

### 2.7.2 Information technology and information access and dissemination

What has emerged in the recent past is the increasing role being played by information technology (IT) and the internet in particular, in terms of information dissemination and arguably, information access. In terms of the former, White (2012) argues that unions need to embrace social media as a tool of communication, pointing to such media allowing unions to have personal conversations with hundreds if not thousands of potential members and supporters. It is thus evident that social media like Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter could be employed by union leadership as an acceptable mechanism of information dissemination. Cell phones (or more specifically "smart phones" which have internet access) have emerged as an important technology in terms of accessing social media and would be an important tool for both union members and leadership to use in terms of maintaining contact and disseminating information.

Greer (2002: 216) points to how IT is shaping life within trade unions. In his study he used a literature review and website content analysis of unions' websites. He focused on various activities, which included internal communications, external communications, bargaining activities, contract administration, and political action of the unions, for which the internet and emails have been used. The purpose of the study was to describe the major effects of

union applications of IT in relation to social transformation and how IT may affect life within unions in the future. Greer (2002) examined websites of all 56 American Federation of Labour (AFL) and Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO`s) national union affiliates with links on the Federation's website. His analysis of the study revealed that 84% of the sites had information related to political issues while 70% had significant content that concerned members' issues. A large number contained information about new contracts that had been signed (49% of the sites), benefits negotiated (57%), ongoing negotiations (48%), and work stoppages (44%). The findings show that many unions have adopted IT (such as email) in their quest to provide their members with required information. The study showed that IT is affecting the life of unions in several important ways and that unions saw email (and the internet technology on which it is based) as key to their future as it enabled more members to participate in union affairs. It is evident from the study that emails could be considered a legitimate information dissemination tool and was thus an aspect examined in the present study.

Panagiontopoulos and Barnett (2014: 2), in their study, assessed the current progress of ICT in union communication with an emphasis on the use of social media. Using existing literature, they found that a union`s selection of communication channels was dependent on the size of their membership base and their participation in communities of practice that promote the use of social media. According to Panagiontopoulos and Barnett (2014: 2) unions have developed the use of online communications like websites, intranets and mailing lists and online networking tools  or social media such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, blogs and video hosting sites. These social networks provide the means for members and diverse audiences to engage with union information. Panagiontopoulos and Barnett (2014) also suggest that social media strategies in unions are likely to be driven by environmental variables such as the expectations of union modernization and pressures from members. It is also evident that the use of social media is a tool in making information available. In the present study the use of social media by the union leadership was also examined.

## 2.7.3 COSATU and information technology

The use of both the external and internal media (see below) assists COSATU to convey their views to their members and the public in general. This underscores the importance of COSATU`s Media and Communication Unit being functional. The 11th COSATU Congress Secretariat Report (2012) highlighted some of the aspects of internal and external media used by COSATU in accessing and providing information. The Report reflected on the use of internal media like sending reports, articles, letters, poems and photos by the shop stewards of COSATU's affiliates and leadership of COSATU in provinces on important events and political developments. The Report also pointed out the use of the *COSATU Today* newsletter, which is inclusive of media statements from COSATU, affiliates, allies, progressive civil society and provinces as a means to provide and disseminate information every week-day. The Secretariat Report also noted the use of COSATU *Media monitor* to disseminate information in relation to labour and political stories from the COSATU internet sites. These stories are sent by email or as links to all the affiliates and regions every Monday to Friday.

In terms of social media, COSATU has acknowledged the slow pace in exploring the use of social media as a means to connect and disseminate information to members (11th COSATU Congress Secretariat Report 2012). However, the Report pointed out that COSATU uses a Twitter account to assist their members in communicating with the leadership at both national and provincial levels and with their respective affiliates. The Report also referred to the new initiative of a digital radio hub that COSATU had initiated. While the initiative was still being developed, COSATU produces its own programmes and distributes them first hand to community radio stations (11th COSATU Congress Secretariat Report 2012). The use of the above mentioned information dissemination tools could play a significant role in the dissemination of information to the union members in UMgungundlovu District and this was borne in mind in the present study.

With regards to external communication, COSATU uses both print and electronic media to send out media statements on a range of topics daily, to many media contacts. Selections from these statements are also forwarded to the affiliates. Some of the COSATU provinces are also providing more statements about local issues and these are sent to provincial

affiliates of COSATU and alliance partners. COSATU also explores opportunities on other platforms of electronic media such as Workers World Media Productions (WWMP) and the radio station - SAFM`s half hour labour programme (11th COSATU Congress Secretariat Report 2012). In as much as COSATU makes use of the above mentioned tools as information dissemination mechanisms, this does not automatically mean that all the affiliates make use of them in addressing the information needs of their members.

Other mechanisms used by COSATU to provide information to union members were also observed in the *Workers' Survey* (2012). The majority (70%) of the COSATU surveyed members when asked about ways in which COSATU reports back after negotiations, indicated that COSATU used meetings or sent someone to address members. A smaller percentage (20%) of respondents stated that COSATU used written notices and 10% pointed to the use of emails. According to the *Workers' Survey* (2012), COSATU members reported that the labour law, negotiations, employment equity and skills development were topics of high importance and information on these topics was provided during the COSATU workshops for its members. The survey underscores the importance of information services in keeping union leaders and members abreast of issues.

### 2.7.4 Internet

The use of the internet for unions in providing access to information and the dissemination of information has been discussed above. As mentioned, the study conducted by Soklic (2004) pointed to the internet facilitating the wide dissemination of information. However, the need for day to day maintenance of the website of unions must be prioritized. Chaplan and Hertenstein (2005: 74) point out that the use of the internet has also manifested in the functioning of labour unions in the United States. A survey was conducted among union leaders in a large Midwestern state, with an economy widely spread among agricultural, manufacturing, mining, transportation and public sectors (Chaplan and Hertenstein 2005: 74). The survey was conducted with labour union leaders` groups that used the internet and also determined how the union leaders were able to use the internet. Of the 239 union leaders who participated, it was found that 170 (71%) respondents reported that they access information from the internet and 67 (28%) respondents reported otherwise. Through the internet, unions use websites to provide up-to-date information for

those members who have access to an internet connection. The results indicated that the majority of the respondents had formal training in using the internet. Formal training was offered by international unions on behalf of the unions they are members of, labour education programmes or colleges and university programmes (Chaplan and Hertenstein 2005: 79).

Given the above, it can be concluded that dissemination of information to union members is being done using various mechanisms. It is evident that information and communication technology (ICT) in the form of email and websites are being increasingly used for both internal and external information dissemination to union members. The education and training of members is an important consideration in this regard.

## 2.8 The effectiveness of trade unions in disseminating information to members

Mwale's (2014) study investigated trade union effectiveness in terms of their role in the Zambian mining sector. Of the 220 respondents (196 male and 24 female) who comprised union members half stated that unions share information on the union's ability to represent membership, while the remaining half said that the union did not. The study further indicated the time intervals in which the information was provided. It was found that 61 respondents indicated that information is shared on a monthly basis while 18 respondents did not know. Thirteen respondents stated that the union provides information on a quarterly basis and 10 indicated that information is provided on a weekly basis. The least frequent intervals used by unions were yearly and six months mentioned by two and three respondents respectively. This is very systematic and suggests a structured approach on the part of the union to sharing information.

It was further found that the information provided by unions in representing its members was useful. The vast majority (89%) of respondents found union information useful while 11% did not. Although such information was found to be useful, which contributes to the effectiveness of the information, the study also found that 61% of the respondents were not happy with the lack of openness and accountability of the unions (as opposed to 39% who had the opposite view). This indicated that although the information provided by unions in representing its members was useful, it was also important for unions to be more open about information on various issues that would benefit its members in gaining further

understanding of the activities of their unions (Mwale 2014: 47). As mentioned 61% of the union members were unhappy with the lack of openness and accountability and thus the ability of the union to disseminate information is questionable where openness and accountability is in question. This raises a concern not only about the effectiveness of the union in disseminating the information to members but also in responding to their information needs. While 89% found that union information was useful, Mwale's (2014) study does not reveal how this information was useful to the union members. In Mwale's (2014) study, it is not clear how the information was shared or disseminated by union leaders to members and what formats were used to make this information available. In the present study, while the aspects of openness and accountability were noted, the questions of how the information was shared and formats used by union leadership were addressed.

A broad discussion on information services in the African context can be found in the Kamba (1997) study. The study looked at the provision of, and access to, various information services in Africa. However, the focus of the study was on rural communities. The study identified various channels or mechanisms by which information could be disseminated to people in rural areas and these included:  social awareness campaigns, public lectures, organized shows, political campaigns, skills acquisition centres, festivals, and communal functions and meetings. In terms of effectiveness, the study underscores the importance of taking into consideration the context in which information provision or dissemination takes place and the need to ensure that the information dissemination mechanisms used are appropriate for the people whom the information is directed at. Trade unions exist in a largely urban context and mechanisms used for providing information to rural communities would not necessarily be appropriate or effective.

## 2.9  What are the problems the union leadership experience in disseminating information?

As has been discussed above, there are various information dissemination mechanisms that can be used to address peoples' information needs. However, these are not without challenges. Mohanty (2007: 8) provides some insights into overcoming these challenges to ensure that the information that is delivered is both accurate and relevant in terms of meeting peoples` information needs. Amongst the points Mohanty (2007: 8) raises is to

have adequate knowledge of the target users. This will include their knowledge of existing information, how they can find the information and their rights to access such information. Knowing whether the users are "connected" (that is, if they have internet access) or not, whether they are able to read and/or analyse the information they receive, whether they can afford the information (should there be a cost involved) and finally, whether they will accept the information, are all issues which need to be considered (Mohanty 2007:8). These points not only help in identifying challenges of information dissemination but warn those who are responsible (like leadership) for the delivery of information to do so correctly. In addition, some further challenges on the aspect of information dissemination are presented below.

## 2.9.1 Information accessibility formats

According to Zhu and He (2002) "Information accessibility refers to the extent which the audience has access to a diversified range of information." In terms of information accessibility, Zhu and He (2002) state that information providers must be concerned with the number of alternative sources of information available to the audience in addition to the official media to address the information needs of information seekers. Smith (1991: 91) is of the view that challenges of information access by recipients may be examined with reference to the format in which the information is obtained and factors related to the settings in which information is used. Smith (1991) pointed out that the ability of users to locate and use the information for their needs must be considered when deciding on a format to be used to facilitate access to the information. As indicated Leach (1999: 161) raised the question of "best format" to be used in delivering or providing information and although Leach`s (1999) study was about people in rural areas the question posed is an important one in terms of information accessibility particularly to the present study. There is a need for information to be presented in an acceptable format that is usable and accessible to the people concerned. It is safe to state that information must be made available in various relevant formats. Ikoja-Odongo (2002) pointed out that where information is made available and it is not easily processed, consumers cannot use it. Therefore simply presenting information is not enough; the "how" of presenting must be considered if the information is to be both retrievable and usable.

Information accessibility also requires affordable mechanisms. Organizations such as unions may be required to make financial payments to ensure information provision for their members.  For example, unions may need to subscribe to the internet, which in the South African context is a costly exercise. The use of the internet by union members as pointed out above, allows them to access information of interest efficiently. Some organizations may further subscribe to online journals in assisting their members to access crucial information for their needs. It is therefore important for the unions to put into place the necessary infrastructure like information centers and systems to ensure and enhance information accessibility for their members. This is particularly important for those members of unions who cannot afford access to the internet.

## 2.9.2 User education and information literacy

A point raised by Mohanty (2007: 8) in relation to how users` may assess the effectiveness of information requires their ability to read and analyse the existing information at their disposal.  Effective and efficient information dissemination mechanisms may be affected by the education and information literacy of the information users. According to the Statistics South Africa in its *Quarterly Labour Force Survey* (2012) union members are more likely to have matric or a degree particularly if they are teachers, nurses or police personnel. Given this, many union members should be literate, but whether they have the ability to analyse the information at their disposal for rightful actions is less certain. However, one cannot assume that all unions' members have the ability to analyse information and to read and write. This of course has implications for the manner in which information is disseminated by the union leadership to their members. Information dissemination in print format, for example, should be used with caution in situations where union members' educational levels are low. Information dissemination must speak to ensuring there are few barriers as possible to union members' easy access to the information.

## 2.9.3 Communication

Although some unions may be able to develop basic education and training programmes with the aim to assist their members in accessing information that can be of use for the betterment of the organization and of the members themselves, communication between the leadership and members of the unions still needs to be prioritized within the ranks of the

unions. The International Labour Organization provides that communication is an important function in ensuring that any organization works effectively, and that communication keeps membership abreast of the programmes and policies of the unions (International Labour Organization 2007). In the 2012 survey conducted by COSATU, the response given by the members on the question of what the union needed to improve on, was the issue of communication. It was pointed out that some of the unions members may even fail to know their leaders because of the lack of communication (*Workers' Survey* 2012: 18). Thus although decision making may fall under the jurisdiction of the leadership of the union, decisions made must be known to the general membership and consultation in this regard would be important. Having effective information dissemination mechanisms in place may increase the level of communication between the stakeholders that are involved and instil good relations and understanding between members and the leaders of the unions.

### 2.9.4 Information Security

Information dissemination can be considered as a means to enhance good relations and communication for many organizations. However, organizations also need to be cautious about issues of information accessibility and dissemination. Mechanisms that can be permitted to be used for a certain organization to enhance communication between its members must also be in line with security considerations for each organization. Information security is a crucial aspect that must be prioritized by the unions. While union leadership needs to adopt certain strategies on how the union must operate or mobilize its members, they are also, or should be, cognizant of information needing to be scrutinized before being made available to members, to prevent the risks of such information getting to the "wrong people". It is clear that union leadership consider the fact that relevant information must be disseminated to the right people at the right time. It is important therefore, that the balance between information dissemination and information security be understood amongst the leadership and general membership of the labour unions. Increasing use of ICTs in information dissemination has resulted in information being vulnerable to getting into the wrong hands and organizations need to be cautious about this.

Unions operate in a very political and contested space, and it is important that their adoption of information dissemination mechanisms must be done in a manner to avoid the

risk of information being misused by unintended recipients. Without good information security measures in place, an organization such as a trade union runs the risk of its integrity being questioned. This can happen, where organizational information is hacked and subsequently misused, thus breaching its trust with clients (members) and damaging its brand and reputation. According to Moss (2005:62) personal information of union members that is available to unions must be protected for their sensitiveness. However Moss (2005) pointed out that unions are the ones that need to protect their members` information from unauthorized access that could result in substantial harm or inconvenience to members. Such information may include drivers` licenses, addresses, telephone numbers, credit accounts, identity documents and more.

The role that information plays within many contexts including that of trade unions cannot be over emphasized. However, there are also limitations that are associated with such information to those who may have access to it particularly when it comes to the information dissemination on sensitive information which may well have security implications.

## 2.10 Summary

This chapter has reviewed the relevant literature in relation to the information seeking and information dissemination by trade union leadership. The lack of literature on the topic was pointed to. Initially, the focus was on what could be the information needs and information seeking behaviour of trade union leadership. The information tools and sources that are or could be used by union leadership in addressing their information needs were also presented. The discussion then shifted to how such information could be made available or is disseminated by leadership to union members. The effectiveness of union leadership in disseminating information to members was also discussed. The aspects of information technology and ICT were discussed. Lastly, problems that face the trade union leadership in disseminating information were outlined.

# Chapter 3: Research Methodology

## 3.0 Introduction

All research is based on some underlying philosophical assumption about what constitutes valid research and research methods applicable to a given study (Babbie and Mouton 2001: 75). Babbie and Mouton (2011: 75) hold that research methodology "focuses on the research process and the kind of tools and procedures to be used". Westbrook (1994: 242) underscores the importance of the research problem in terms of the methodology adopted stating that "The research problem must determine the research approach and the methods employed" in such a way that they draw reliable and valid results. He further points out that there is no single method or approach that can fit every problem but a choice for a method to be used must be made (Westbrook 1994: 242).

This chapter describes the research methodology used to investigate the information seeking and information dissemination by leadership of unions affiliated to the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in the UMgungundlovu District. More specifically, this chapter discusses the different paradigms that exist, which impact on research and also the design strategy underpinning this study. The post-positivist paradigm was identified for the framework of the study. Ethical issues are reflected on and the chapter ends with a summary.

## 3.1 Social research paradigms

According to McGregor and Murnane (2010), "within the academy, it is common knowledge that a paradigm is a set of assumptions, concepts, values and practices that constitutes a way of viewing reality for the community that shares them." Bhattacherjee (2012: 17) refers to a paradigm as a "mental model or frame of reference that we use to organize our reasoning and observations." The variety in the research questions being asked in information and library science have been linked with different research paradigms that have emerged in the social sciences (Wildemuth 1993: 450). This is evident since many of the studies in the library and information sciences have taken shape through these paradigms. The word paradigm is used interchangeably and interlinked with terms such as research model or pattern by social science researchers. According to

Neuman (2011: 94) a "paradigm is a general organizing framework for theory and research that includes basic assumptions, key issues, models of quality research, and methods for seeking answers." A paradigm becomes an architect for the research process. It shapes and nurtures the destination or goal of the study. A research paradigm is thus a theoretical perspective that nurtures a given study to respond on key aspects of what is being studied. It shapes the investigation process in that an individual researcher, group of researchers, or an institution is required to take certain positions in social research. Research paradigms contain predominant rules for finding explanations of events. While there are different research paradigms that are used by researchers, this study has limited the discussion to three paradigms known in the social sciences namely, positivist, interpretivist and post-positivist (du Preez 2008).

### 3.1.1 Positivist paradigm

The positivist paradigm is based on the ideas, beliefs and perceptions of the French philosopher August Comte, considered the father of positivism (Babbie and Mouton 2011:22). According to him, observation and reason are the best means of understanding human behaviour and that true knowledge is based on experience of sense and can be obtained by observation and experiment (Hennin, Van Rensburg and Smith 2004: 7). This paradigm is rooted in the physical sciences and uses a systematic scientific approach to research (Bernard 2000: 9). According to Babbie and Mouton (2011: 22) Comte viewed all branches of knowledge passing through consecutive stages namely, the theological or fictitious, the metaphysical or abstract and the scientific or positive (his famous law of three stages). In the theological phase the behaviour of phenomena in terms of certain supernatural entities is being explained. This stage explains the origin of things through genetic explanations or teleological explanation. In this stage, Comte suggests, that "human beings rely on supernatural agencies to explain what they cannot explain otherwise." The second phase is the metaphysical which, for Babbie and Mouton (2011), adjusts the theological phase in that it explains things in forms of abstract forces and not merely religious or metaphysical. In the scientific or positive phase, Trochim (2006) points out that Comte gave up the idea of scientists explaining observable behaviour in terms of underlying causes or entities, but rather concentrated on the direct, observable relations of contiguity and correlation between phenomena.

Hughes (2001) explains that in the positivist paradigm, the world that we live in is based on unchanging, universal laws and the view that everything that occurs around us can be explained by knowledge of universal laws. Thus our understanding about these universal laws allows us to observe and record events and phenomena around us in a systematic way and then work out the underlying principle that has caused the events to occur. Trochim (2006) provides that positivists hold that the goal of knowledge is simply to stick to what we can observe and measure, thus knowledge beyond that would be regarded as impossible. Thus positivists reject topics that cannot be observed and measured like emotions and thoughts. They are not seen as legitimate topics in scientific research (Trochim 2006). Therefore in a positivist view of the world, science is seen as the way to the truth, to understanding the world well enough so that people might predict and control it. As the positivists rely on empiricism and rationalism, the idea that observation and measurement was the core of the scientific endeavour was entrenched (Trochim 2006). Knowledge is thus seen as being objective and quantifiable. Moreover, positivists hold that the researcher and the researched are independent of each other. In responding to the question of objectivity in research (which is a fundamental aspect when dealing with research), positivists relate that it is the individual researcher who is responsible for their own biases thereby putting aside their own beliefs and ideas to see the world as it is.

### 3.1.2 Interpretivist paradigm

Interpretivism is the paradigm that holds that the reality consists of peoples` subjective experiences of the external world. Thus interpretivists may adopt an inter-subjective epistemology and the ontological belief that reality is socially constructed. They view truth as not absolute but decided by human judgment (Bernard, 2000: 19). Interpretivists hold that there is no single method to knowledge, thus there are no correct or incorrect theories. However, theories according to interpretivists should be judged in terms of how interesting they are to the researcher, as well as those involved in similar areas. They assume that knowledge and meaning are acts of interpretation; hence there is no objective knowledge, which is independent of thinking and reasoning from humans. Interpetivisits also hold that access to reality is only through social constructions such as language, consciousness and shared meaning. Interpretivism is underpinned by observation and interpretation. Thus to observe is to collect information about events, while to interpret is to make meaning of that

information by drawing inferences or by judging the match between the information and some abstract pattern (Trochim 2006). Interpretivism, like humanism, provides that there are two possible studies in social research. The first being the human sciences (which involve human beings) and the other being natural sciences. Human beings live in a web of meanings that they spin themselves, it is important to understand those meanings of social events and their make-up (Bernard 2000:19).

Interpretivists' concern is to understand the world from the subjective experience of individuals. They use meaning oriented methodologies (meaning given by human beings), such as interviewing or participant observation, that rely on a subjective relationship between the researcher and subjects. Interpretivists attempt to understand phenomena through the meaning that people assign to them (Bernard 2000: 19). Interpretivism, being similar to humanism, is very subjective as the interpretivist commits to the meanings assigned by human beings, which involve feelings, values and beliefs to achieve insights into the nature of human experience. This is very problematic when dealing with objectivity in research (Trochim 2006).

### 3.1.3 Post-positivist paradigm

The post-positivist paradigm is not a revision of the positivist paradigm, it is a total shift. It is a whole rejection of positivist beliefs (Trochim 2006). According to Trochim (2006), post-positivism starts by recognizing that the way scientists think and work and the way we think in our everyday life are not distinctly different. The post-positivists point out that there is no single correct method in dealing with a particular study. This is based on the belief that although the object of our inquiry exists outside and independent of the human mind, it cannot be perceived with total accuracy by our observations. In other words, complete objectivity is nearly impossible to achieve but this helps in regulating our search for knowledge (Phillips 1990). The post-positivists, therefore, use a combination of methods to deal with a particular study; this is also known as methodological pluralism. By methodological pluralism this paradigm acts as a mediator between the conflicting debate between positivist and interpretivist paradigms, by accepting them both as important for the multiple perspectives in a study (Wildermuth 1993).

The post-positivist, as a critical realist, believes that the goal of science is to hold steadfastly to the goal of getting right about reality, even though we can never achieve that goal. The post-positivist appreciates the role of both quantitative and qualitative methods in a study. As pointed out by Trochim (2006) post-positivism uses multiple measures and observations, each which may possess different types of errors. It recognizes the need to use triangulation across these multiple sources of error to try and achieve a better result on what is happening in reality. This is based on the premise that human beings, as they grow, are influenced by many cultural, religious and political beliefs and ideas. Given that scientists are human beings, cultural motives and political and religious beliefs influence their research work. Therefore, what is needed is a post-positivist world where one accepts that each person has his or her own understanding of the world that he or she constructs. But it is possible that we translate the world in accordance with our perceptions too (Trochim 2006).

### 3.1.4 Post-positivist paradigm and the present study

According to Mertens (2005:7) a "researcher`s theoretical orientation has implications for every decision made in the research process including the choice of method". According to Wilson (2005), research on information behaviour has mainly adopted a qualitative and interpretative paradigm while information retrieval research is mainly positivist in nature. In this study the post-positivist paradigm was endorsed. It is important to point out that the researcher is not at any point committed to a certain paradigm but links the study to a certain method/s or paradigm to address the research questions. As pointed out by Cavaye (1996), the "methodology chosen depends on what one is trying to do rather than a commitment to a particular paradigm and that the methodology employed must match the particular phenomenon of interest."

This study used two data collection methods namely, questionnaires which are aligned with quantitative studies and the interview which is aligned with qualitative studies or approaches. The use of both methods is acceptable when the researcher or research is linked with the post-positivist paradigm. By using the post-positivist paradigm, the researcher aimed to provide a more holistic and comprehensive view of information behaviour of the respondents under investigation and by so doing increase the validity of the results. In

producing the results it is important to use the methods (interviews and questionnaires) such that they complement each other (Creswell 2003: 7). The use of two combined methods as supported by the post-positivist paradigm in a single study is described by Babbie and Mouton (2001: 57) as methodological triangulation, which may lead to more valid and reliable results. This is also explained and supported by Hussey and Hussey (1997) who state that triangulation can overcome the potential bias and sterility of a single method. Thus it was important for the study to be concerned with the correct methods for collecting and categorizing information as this point is underscored in the post-positivist paradigm. As mentioned, this study aimed to get a better understanding of information seeking and dissemination by the leadership of unions affiliated to COSATU. The use of the post-positivist paradigm helped the researcher to achieve this.

## 3.2 Research methods

The research method is a strategy of enquiry, which moves from the underlying assumptions to research design and data collection (Meyers 2009). Research methods refer to how research data is collected and analysed and the type of generalizations and representations that can be derived from the data. The most common classification of research methods is into qualitative and quantitative methods. Depending on the study, some researchers may use one of the above methods or a combination of both methods depending on the methodological foundation of the study (Bryman and Burgess 1999: 45). It is true that neither of these methods (qualitative and quantitative) is intrinsically better than the other, but one which is more suitable is decided by the context and purpose of the research study in question. Again a mixed methods approach can also be relevant and advantageous. A discussion of the qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods is reflected below.

### 3.2.1 Quantitative research methods

According to du Preez (2008) quantitative research aims to produce generalizable results represented by numerical or statistical data. Quantitative research makes use of questionnaires, surveys and experiments to gather information and it is analysed and tabulated in numbers. Quantitative data is independent of the perceptions of the person being studied and is in the form of "numbers" for statistical analysis. It is collected in a

designated time frame through structured interviews, questionnaires, observation, scales, or physiologic instruments within a controlled environment and the researcher manipulates the environment to control for variables. It uses probability sampling methods. Quantitative researchers measure variables on a sample of subjects and express the relationships between the variables using statistics such as correlations, frequencies or differences between means. To conduct a quantitative analysis, researchers often must engage in a coding process after data collection (du Preez 2008).

### 3.2.2 Qualitative research methods

According to Gorman and Clayton (2005: 3) "Qualitative research attempts to describe specific observed phenomena to derive possible explanations for their occurrences". Leedy and Ormrod (2005:94) state that qualitative research is typically used to answer questions about complex phenomena and is also referred to as the interpretative or constructivist or post-positivist approach. The key assumption made by qualitative researchers is that the meaning of events, occurrences and interactions can be understood only through the eyes of the actual participants in a specific situation. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005:94), qualitative research "presents data as descriptive narration with words and attempts to understand phenomena in natural settings and explain things in their natural settings". Qualitative research lies within the interpretivist paradigm (Gorman and Clayton 2005: 3). It involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter, and attempts to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them (Denzin and Lincoln 2003). In qualitative research, different knowledge claims, enquiry strategies and data collection methods and analysis are employed (Creswell 2003). Qualitative data sources include observation and participant observation (fieldwork) interviews and questionnaires, documents and texts and the researcher`s impressions and reactions (Meyers 2009). Qualitative methods utilize non-probability methods in sampling.

### 3.2.3 Mixed methods

Mixed methods integrate both qualitative and quantitative methods in one study to improve the study`s results. It involves both qualitative and quantitative methods so that the overall strength of a study is greater than either a qualitative or quantitative result

(Creswell, 2009: 4, 2015: 2). According to Creswell (2015: 3) mixed method is not simply about gathering the quantitative and qualitative data or a matter of labelling the study, but it consists of "specific scientific techniques associated with this methodology". Creswell (2015: 4) further states that the mixed method is aimed at the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data in response to research questions. This is not to suggest that qualitative and quantitative studies are not of quality work. However, the attribute referred to here is that mixed methods provide more relevant results that could not be possible using only a single method (Creswell, 2009). According to Fidel (2008: 266) the general understanding regarding mixed methods is that in research the quality of a study can be improved when the biases, limitations, and weaknesses of a method following one approach are counterbalanced or compensated by mixing with a method belonging to another approach. Fidel (2008: 266) points out that mixed methods research is not common in library and information science and has not been discussed in its literature. However, he also concedes that the social and behavioural science has, for many decades, employed mixed methods research. These methods comprised the use of a questionnaires-based survey, observation, and interviews (Fidel 2008: 266). The use of mixed methods is associated with the post-positivist paradigm as this type of research uses a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods in a single study. As mentioned above the use of this type of research methods is also known as triangulation.

## 3.3 Research design

Research design is the actual plan of research that throws light on how the study is to be conducted (Babbie and Mouton 2011). The research design of the present study was the survey. Guyette (1983) states that "more specifically, the survey is a method of collecting data in a consistent or systematic manner by constructing a set of questions that can be asked through methods such as questionnaires or interviews." The more common methods used to collect data in a survey study are the questionnaire and interview. Depending on the research and researcher, the administration of these methods may vary in the survey. Some researchers may choose to use face-to-face interviews or telephone interviews, some may choose to use paper questionnaires (self-administered) or online questionnaires or a combination of these methods. The methods used in this study are discussed under 3.5 below.

Surveys are employed in many fields including political science, social psychology, economics and education. They are also used in many applied research fields, such as marketing and mass media research as well as policy research undertaken by government departments (Babbie and Mouton 2011: 230). Survey research is also suitable for measuring a wide variety of unobservable data, such as people's preferences, traits, attitudes, beliefs and behaviour (information seeking behaviour) (Bhattacherjee 2012:73). It is the most frequently used research design in the social sciences and most particularly available and used in addressing topics in the field of library and information science (Case, 2007). Surveys may be used for descriptive, explanatory and exploratory purposes. Since this study could be considered exploratory in nature, it fits in well with survey research (Babbie and Mouton 2011: 232).

Surveys are useful because they help with collecting data in a relatively cheap and fast way, and one is able to collect large amounts of original data in a relatively short period of time (Maree 2007: 155). As mentioned above, surveys can be administered in many ways including online (emailing) or paper surveys, telephonically or face-to-face. The researcher is free to choose whichever way to conduct the survey. To get the most accurate data, respondents must be as open and honest as possible with their answers. Using an approach that assures anonymity of respondents provides an avenue for more honest and unambiguous responses. The advantage of a survey study is that where the survey is a census, it allows all possible respondents to be included and no one is left out. This helps to increase the validity and reliability of the results (Maree 2007).

### 3.4 Choice of methods

There were two data collection methods that were used in the present study, namely the self-administered questionnaire and the face-to-face interview. The discussion and selection of these methods or techniques of data collection below are provided in terms of their advantages and disadvantages. Their appropriateness for the study is also discussed.

### 3.4.1 Self-administered questionnaires

Mitchell and Jolley (2013: 286) provide that self-administered questionnaires are easily distributed to a large number of people and often provide for anonymity.

### 3.4.1.1 Advantages

The use of questionnaires allows a meaningful comparison of responses across the respondents with both open and closed questions. They are also relatively cheap and quick to administer and large amounts of information can be collected from a large number of people in a short period of time (Mitchell and Jolley 2013: 286). Questionnaires reduce the possibility of interviewer bias and are convenient since respondents can complete them in their own time and place (University of Johannesburg…Questionnaire design 2014). Lastly, the results of questionnaires can be quantified by the researcher. Self-administered questionnaires are only appropriate when the population under study is adequately literate (Babbie and Mounton, 2011: 258). The administration of questionnaires is discussed in more detail later.

### 3.4.1.2 Disadvantages

Administering questionnaires and getting proper and adequate responses may be affected by respondents' level of literacy. Getting adequate responses can be quite problematic and cannot always be controlled by the researcher. Not getting proper and adequate responses may be caused by the fact that some of the questions may have been misinterpreted and the meaning of certain concepts, phrases, and terms misunderstood by respondents. It may also be caused by the existing belief that the question will mean the same or be interpreted the same way by all respondents (Cargan 2007: 117). According to Bird (2009: 1313) issues of complexity of questions and the length of the questions in the questionnaire need to be taken into consideration as they could also affect responses. Bird (2009) pointed out that the mode of administering questionnaires can also contribute to poor response rates in studies. The mode of administering questionnaires can take different forms as mentioned above, including the use of telephone and email.

### 3.4.2 Interviews

According to Humphrey and Lee (2004: 289) an interview as a method of data collection that not only "allows interviewees a degree of freedom to explain their thoughts, highlights the areas of particular interest and expertise that they felt they had, but also gives an opportunity for their responses to be questioned in great depth". Face-to-face interviews

were held with some of the union leadership (see below) in order to get more in-depth answers relating to the key questions and to get more insight as the questions asked in the interview expanded on the questions asked in the survey questionnaire. The interviews sought to reduce the shortcomings of the questionnaire. Interviews are highly efficient in obtaining qualitative data. More detail on the advantages of interviews are outlined below.

### 3.4.2.1 Advantages

Ramasodi (2005: 21) states that "a good interview is like a good conversation – it is a two-way affair. One person talks while the other listens, responds and encourages. In a good interview, the person who does most of the talking is the interviewee." In this way the researcher is at ease as the interviewee provides more information during the interview. It is more advantageous when the researcher has informed the respondents well about the subject matter. Interviews are like social interactions, they involve norms, expectations and social roles like any other human interactions (Babbie and Mouton 2011: 249).

According to Cargan (2007:119) the interviewer and interviewee can easily react to what the other may say or do. Interviews encourage respondents' participation and allow the researcher to give clarity on certain questions that are not clear to respondents (Cargan 2007: 119). In the present study they also allowed the researcher to probe further and at times clarify answers that were provided (Nkomo 2009: 48). Unlike questionnaires, where questions are not always responded to, interviews allow the researcher to ensure that all questions are asked and answered, thus ensuring fewer incomplete questions (Babbie and Mouton 2011: 262). Ramasodi (2005) provides that "during the interview process, a tape-recorder can be used to record the conversation".

### 3.4.2.2 Disadvantages

Interviews require more resources, like time, money and physical strength as they are time consuming and can be costly (Guyette1983) (see below on the actual conducting of the interviews). The interviewer needs to prepare the interview meetings with the respondents who, during the meeting, may take their time while answering the questions and occasionally follow up questions from the interviewer for more clarity are required (Phellas, Bloch and Seale 2011: 183). According to Ramasodi (2009:25) interviews also affect the

participants in one way or the other. Ramasodi (2009) pointed out that interviews require energy from the side of the interviewee. He also stressed that some interviewees have stage fright (as if they are interrogated) and sometimes dislike the use of tape recorders and many open questions, which can make participants vulnerable.

## 3.5 Self-administered questionnaire and interviews in the present study

In terms of the present study the disadvantages associated with administering the questionnaires and how they were addressed are discussed under 3.8 below. It was considered that the respondents under study were deemed to be adequately literate in English to understand and respond to the questions posed. The study population was small and convenient for the administration of the questionnaires. The questions in the survey questionnaire were asked in such a way that they answered the key questions of the research. The questions in the questionnaires were clear and unambiguous. Lastly, the questionnaire was also precise and respondents knew, in the main, exactly what the researcher was asking (Babbie and Mouton 2011: 234).

Other disadvantages were addressed as follows: While questionnaires were being completed, it was observed, despite having conducted a pre-test (see below also) that there were questions that were misunderstood, especially those questions relating to NUMSA. Since such concerns were raised in the presence of the researcher, the researcher was able to respond and explain what was meant. The respondents were also assured anonymity in that that identification was not asked for and thus not made known in the study - this would have helped in terms of getting valid responses. The questionnaire questions in the present study were not too long and not too short. The questions were also not complex but self-explanatory as pointed out by Bird (2009: 1313).

For interviews, the researcher was able to prepare to meet with the respondents on dates, times and locations convenient to the respondents. As with the completion of the questionnaires, during the interviews there was also a need for the interviewer to clarify some of the questions and follow-up on some of the interviewees' responses. A recorder was used in the present study, the researcher having obtained prior permission from the interviewees.

Also important, was the fact that the researcher was able to speak the language of the majority of the respondents, namely isiZulu. However, while the interviews were conducted in English (a language which all respondents could speak) where necessary, clarity and explanations given by the researcher were provided in the respondents' first language which, as mentioned, was isiZulu. Babbie and Mouton (2011) do raise the contentious issue of the interviewer being of the same ethnic grouping, sex and age category as the people being interviewed as some respondents would prefer to have an interviewer who shared the same characteristics. All interviews were done by the researcher himself and at no point did he feel his age, gender and ethnic group negatively impacted on the interview process. Any questions of concern, which respondents might have had were discussed before the interviews took place and interviews were given willingly. The fact that the researcher abided by all the protocols needed to arrange the interviews, including permission from gatekeepers, assisted in ensuring willing participation and a generally smooth interviewing process.

### 3.5.1 Choice of questions.

Two types of questions were used in the data collection instruments. These were open questions in which respondents were expected to give answers in their own words and closed questions in which the respondents could select an answer/s from a given list of answers. A combination of both open and closed questions was used in the self-administered questionnaire while the interview schedule consisted mainly of open questions. The self-administered questionnaire comprised three sections. Section A consisted of background and geographical questions, Section B covered information needs and information seeking behaviour and Section C questions dealt with the specific case of NUMSA. There were 46 questions in total that respondents were asked to respond to. (See Appendix 3 for a copy of the questionnaire and Appendix 4 for a copy of the interview schedule).

### 3.5.1.1 Advantages of open questions

According to Phellas, Bloch and Seale (2011:195), open questions are questions without the obvious response choices - they require the participants to formulate their own answer using their own words. There is thus no undue influence the researcher could cause in terms of the

respondents' responses. Nor is there any limit in terms of the amount of detail that respondents can provide in providing their responses. According to Lee (2005: 769) open questions provide the respondent with the opportunity to give their own opinions and this can result in unanticipated findings being discovered. Lee (2005: 769) goes on to point out that "Open questions permit creativity, self-expression and richness of details…[they] not only reveal a respondents' logic, but the thinking process and frame of reference."

### 3.5.1.2 Disadvantages of open questions

Lee (2005: 768) states that "In answering and interpreting open-ended questions, there is a problem that some respondents will give answers that are irrelevant to the purpose of the analysis or evaluation." This may result due to the fact that open questions may demand or require more effort on the part of the respondents when answering questions. In terms of the current study the disadvantages of open questions were observed. As a consequence the open questions in the questionnaires were kept to a minimum. It was noted that although there was enough space for respondents to express their answers in response to the questions, at times irrelevant information was also provided as pointed to by Lee (2005: 768) above. Another reason for limiting the number of open questions is that the responses are more difficult and time-consuming to analyse than closed questions (Hair *et al*. 2015: 256).

### 3.5.1.3 Advantages of closed questions

Closed questions are structured in that they provide fixed responses to questions from which the respondent has to choose. These questions may include multiple choices, yes or no, and true or false answers (Lee 2005:768). Some questions may include rating scales, where respondents are asked to rate their answer/s according to some scale. According to Lee (2005:768), closed questions are commonly used in questionnaires and designed for easy administration and greater uniformity of responses. Respondents find them easier and quicker to answer and the answers are easier to code and statistically analyse. Closed questions also reduce irrelevant or confused answers to questions (Creswell 2009).

### 3.5.1.4 Disadvantages of closed questions

According to Reja et al. (2003), closed questions may appear to suggest the responses to respondents, but there is also a need to accumulate responses that might have not been achieved at all if such questions were not asked. Other disadvantages of closed questions, is that they are perceived as easier to answer, thus making it possible for anyone, even those without the requisite knowledge to answer. Misinterpretation of questions can go unnoticed. In terms of the current study, the use of open questions was limited, thus questions were predominantly closed. This aimed to give respondents enough time to go through all the questions and be able to answer them fully in a short space of time. Since the respondents were literate and the researcher was present during the answering of questions, misinterpretation was not much of a concern. The use of more closed questions also assisted the researcher during coding of data and statistical analysis.

### 3.6 Population

Terre-Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006: 113) define population as "the larger pool from which sampling elements are drawn and to which findings are to be generalized". According to Sekaran (2003:265) "population is the entire group of people, events or things of interest that the researcher wishes to investigate." The research study population was made up of the leadership of unions in the UMgungundlovu District, which were affiliated to COSATU. Twelve such unions at both branch and regional level were identified by looking at the COSATU list of unions registered as affiliated in the District. As pointed out in Chapter 1, three union unions out of the twelve disengaged from participating in the study. As noted in the limitations of the study the three COSATU affiliated unions had no offices within the area delineated for the study. This was considered as an exclusion factor and uncontrollable limitation of study. Nine of the affiliates participated with 10 participants per union, giving the total of 90 participants (more on population is discussed under 3.6.1 Population sample). The participants were selected on the bases of their role which involved in handling or dissemination of information to union members. The branch secretaries and regional secretaries were consulted and various portfolios list of the respective members responsible for the handling or dissemination of information were provided to the researcher.

As described in the introductory chapter, a union leader was defined as a member of the union who occupies a formal leadership position or role in the structure of the organization. As has been pointed above there were a number of such positions. The union secretaries were asked to provide the researcher with lists of union leaders responsible for information dissemination in their unions. The Branch Executive Committee and Regional Executive Committee union structures were identified in consultation with union secretaries and were selected to participate in this study. Since the number of participants was small with a maximum of ten members per list the researcher used a survey to include all members who were on these lists.

### 3.6.1 Population sample

Given the small size of the population used for the questionnaire survey, no sampling was done and all 90 union leaders identified as being in a leadership position were included in the questionnaire survey. This is referred to as a census. As the Research Observatory (2014) states, when the potential population is small, it is often feasible to undertake a census to ensure that all their views are represented. However, while all leaders completed the self-administered questionnaire, not all were interviewed given the limitations cited above. There were 18 office bearers that were interviewed - two from each of the nine affiliates unions who participated in the study. These union leaders were also participants in the questionnaire survey. Using a purposive sampling approach, the selection was done with the assistance of the union secretaries, who were able to provide information about the union officials. The first criterion in determining who would comprise the interview sample was that the respondents were in a "leadership" position. The second benchmark was that their positions involved information dissemination in some way or necessitated information provision to their respective union members. As noted, 18 respondents were identified and who formed the sample.

### 3.7 Validity and Pre-testing

Bell (1999: 104) defines validity as "whether an item measures or describes what it is supposed to measure or describe". Pre-testing is all about ensuring that questions are understood and there is no ambiguity. Pre-testing plays an important role in maximizing the reliability and validity of the data collection instruments (Ngulube 2003: 215). In ensuring

validity the questionnaires used in the present study were pretested on two individuals who were former union members in leadership positions and questions were adjusted on the basis of the responses and comments received from this pre-test.

During the pre-test it was found that the respondents did not answer a question as expected by the researcher. For example, in question 1 that asked the pre-test respondents about their age. Both respondents did not answer the question. The researcher thereafter changed the question by providing age ranges that the respondents fell into. Another adjustment was done in question 7 which asked the pre-test respondents to state the year they joined the union. The researcher changed the question to "how long have you been a union member?" The answer provided was again given in ranges of years (categories) that the respondent fell into.

In pre-testing the interviews the sample of questions to be posed to the research participants, were also pre-tested on the two former union members above. They assisted the researcher through their responses and comments to identify ambiguous questions and where clarity was needed. Questions were adjusted on the basis of their responses and comments.

In addition, an article by Pennsylavania State University (2006) states that; "one way to increase validity of survey results is to ensure that respondents in the survey process are the stakeholders who are affected by the processes under review in the survey". The respondents in the present study were stakeholders who were affected by the process of the study and this would also have contributed to the validity of their responses. Content validation was achieved by ensuring that the research/key questions posed (see Chapter 1) were indeed addressed in the questionnaire and interviews (Babbie and Mouton 2011: 122). A second type of validity is external validity which "refers to the degree to which the results are generalized to the wider population, cases or situations" (Afsar 2014: 13). The generalization of results of this study to the entire leadership of unions affiliated to COSATU in the province is debatable and one cannot assume that they are. Any generalization/s to the wider union leadership would thus have to be done with caution.

## 3.8 Administering the questionnaires

The questionnaires were distributed by the researcher during union leadership meetings which were held at local and regional offices of the union. The researcher attended a total of nine such meetings which were held during March and April of 2015. These meetings consisted of the leadership as defined in the introductory chapter (see Chapter 1). Importantly, the meetings provided an opportunity for the researcher to explain how the questionnaires were to be answered and returned and to answer any questions which may have arisen. The former was done in a manner that was coherent and understandable to the respondents in attendance. Union leaders were encouraged to complete the questionnaires immediately. However, the majority of the participants completed the questionnaires during their own time and once completed returned them to the union secretaries. The researcher collected the completed questionnaire from the secretaries.

However, not all union leaders were present during those meetings. To ensure that they participated in the study, some questionnaires were left with the union secretaries to give to those leaders who were not present and the completed questionnaires were subsequently collected from the secretaries by the researcher. The union secretaries thus assisted with both the distribution and the collection of the questionnaires.

## 3.9 Conducting the interviews

All the interviews were held in the union offices of the respondents as this was determined (by the respondents) as the most convenient location. The time of the interview was agreed upon beforehand and each of the respondents were given the interview schedule to pursue before the interview took place. Interviews were done with two respondents per union as explained earlier. There was no specific time in which the interview was scheduled to end and the time taken for each interview varied. In terms of the latter, it was difficult and out of the researcher's control to determine how much time the interviewee would take when responding to a particular question. What emerged was that each interview took more time than the researcher expected. However, as pointed out earlier, it was observed that union leaders did not have a problem with the interview process (and the time it took) as the process was explained to them. Permission to use the tape recorder was also granted before each interview session. The respondents were cooperative and answered the questions

posed to them. All 18 interviews were conducted in June 2015 and all the interviews were conducted in English.

## 3.10 Response rate

Babbie and Mouton (2001: 261) state that a response rate of 50% is adequate for analysis and reporting, while responses rates of 60% are good and 70% are very good. Williams (2003) in fact suggests that a response rate of 20% for self-administered questionnaires is sufficient for reporting and analysing findings. Of the 90 questionnaires that were distributed, 71 were completed and returned thus yielding a very good response rate of 78.8%. There were various reasons that were observed by the researcher why some questionnaires were not returned. One of the reasons was that those union leaders who were allowed to take the questionnaire home, misplaced them. Some union leaders could not drop off the completed questionnaires during week days as the secretary`s offices closed before they finished work and on weekends the union offices are closed. In terms of the interviews all 18 union leaders identified participated in the process.

## 3.11 Data analysis

Data analysis is the practical application of formal mathematical procedures to the analysis of data in social science (Neuman 2000: 134). In order to start the process of data analysis, the researcher needs to put the collected data in a different form to what it was when it was collected (Neuman 2000: 134). Data analysis involves a number of closely related operations which are performed with the purpose of summarizing the collected data and organizing them in such a way that they answer research questions (Kothari, 1990: 151). Patton (2002: 436) holds that data analysis and report writing are intertwined and are not distinct steps. According to Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006: 321), there is no clear point at which data collections ends and analysis commences in qualitative research studies. The same sentiment can also be applied to quantitative studies in that it also difficult to draw a line at where data collection starts and where it ends. A mixture of data analysis techniques was used in the present study. Since both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods were employed in the present study, both quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods had to be used. These included descriptive analysis using

the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and qualitative thematic content analysis.

It is important to point out that not all information could be analysed quantitatively, some responses to the open questions consisted of lengthy descriptions that were difficult to categorize and quantify. Below is the discussion of the analysis of the two types of questions asked – as mentioned closed questions predominated in the questionnaires while open questions were present in the interview schedule.

### 3.11.1 Analysis of closed questions

Questionnaires were evaluated to check for missing data, ambiguity and errors in the responses. Closed questions were structured in that they provide fixed responses to questions from which the respondent has to choose. There were no difficulties with the coding and analysis of closed questions using the SPSS. The questionnaires were coded and entered into the computer for processing using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program. However, it must be noted that the both the interview schedule and questionnaire were predominated by open questions. Below is the discussion of the analysis of open questions.

### 3.11.2 Analysis of open questions

Content analysis was used to interpret the responses to the open questions (in both the questionnaires and interviews). According to Powel (1991: 164) open questions are easily analysed with content analysis. Content analysis is defined by Stemler (2001: 1) as a "systematic, replicable technique for compressing many words for text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding".

Content analysis is in two forms. The first one is the relational analysis and the second, conceptual analysis (Powel 1991). The latter, as explained by Majyambere (2012), involves reading and re-reading responses to try to make sense of the patterns and themes that emerged from the data. In the present study meaningful categories for the responses to the open questions from the questionnaires were created thus allowing the data to be easily coded in the computer for analysis. During the analysis, the responses to the open questions were listed with relevant passages being bundled and summarized. Thematic analyses of

text were employed. With this being used, the researcher was able to identify themes and threads in the responses.

The questions in the interview schedule used (see Appendix 4) were, as noted above, all open which allowed the respondents to give much detail during the interview. As pointed out by Majyambere (2012) the content analysis was used to analyse these questions. According to Nkomo (2009: 58) the difficulty of analysing open-questions is that a researcher may lose meaning and subtlety in the responses of respondents. However, to retain this meaning, Nkomo (2009) states that qualitative content analysis must be employed for data obtained from responses to open questions in questionnaires and interviews. The interview data was paraphrased, which mean that relevant passages were bundled and summarized and placed into categories. The various categories were coded and fed into the SPSS software for analysis. The headings and various subheadings in the interview schedules were used as guidelines in determining the categories that were used to code and analyse the data.

## 3.12 Ethical considerations

According to Isreal and Hay (2006) it is important that researchers protect their research participants, develop trust with them, promote the truthfulness of research, and guard against misconduct and offensiveness that might reflect on their organization or institutions. Payne and Payne (2004) stated that ethical considerations represent a moral attitude that involves conducting research to achieve not just high professional standards of technical procedure, but also respect and protection for people actively consenting to be studied. Common categories in which most research ethical issues fall include informed consent, protection from harm, honesty from researchers and the right to privacy (Leedy and Ormond 2005: 101). The moral integrity of a researcher is stated as a critical aspect of ensuring that the research process and a researcher`s findings are trustworthy and valid (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011: 59).

In the current study the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) Research Ethics Policy (UKZN 2014) was adhered to and clearance to conduct the study was received from the UKZN Research Office. Among the ethical issues that were taken into consideration in the current study where the type of population under investigation, informed consent and

confidentiality. According to Williams (2003: 166) "Informed consent implied that those being researched not only know that they are being researched, but also that they should be able to comprehend why." It is said to involve competence, voluntarism, full information on, and comprehension of, the nature of the study (Leedy and Ormrod 2005:101). Those participating in the research as respondents should be able to freely decide whether to participate or not. One of the means to seek informed consent is to use an informed consent letter, which describes the nature of the research. Each respondent in the study should sign it to show they agree to participate in the study (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011: 63). This was done in the current study (see Appendix 2 for a copy of the informed consent form). Finally, confidentiality was ensured throughout data collection and reporting by not asking for, nor making use of, the names of respondents whether they completed the questionnaires or participated in the interview.

## 3.13 Summary

This chapter has outlined the different research paradigms that exist in social research, and discussed qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods research in relation to the study. It explained the research design, population of the study and data collection methods. The chapter gave reasons for having a mixed methods approach, namely the use of both a self-administered questionnaire and an interview. The choice of questions in both questionnaires and interviews was discussed and their respective advantages and disadvantages outlined. The distribution of the questionnaires was described as was the conducting of the interviews. The importance of pre-testing the instruments was pointed to in the light of validity of the research. The chapter also discussed the data analysis applied and lastly, ethical considerations relating to the study were outlined.

## Chapter 4: Presentation of results

### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter analyses and presents the research findings. These findings were drawn from self-administered questionnaires that were distributed to the union leadership and face-to-face interviews with two union office bearers from each of the nine unions partaking in the study. In the presentation below, the questions asked are explained and the results pertaining to the questions are provided. As noted in the previous chapter, the questionnaire data, in particular the responses to the closed questions, were analysed and processed using the SPSS. The interview data was also paraphrased, summarized into categories and coded into the SPSS software for analysis.

The findings relating to the questionnaire survey are provided first and these are followed by the findings from the interviews.

### 4.1 Response rate for questionnaires

Out of the initial 12 unions targeted, three were excluded from the study and nine remained. Out of 90 questionnaires that were distributed to the remaining nine unions, a total number of 71 questionnaires were returned. This represents a response of 78.8% of the total sent. As noted in Chapter 3 this can be considered a positive response rate that is actually very good for a study of this type.

In the presentation of findings below the symbol N indicates the total number of respondents that a particular question was directed at. The percentages of findings were rounded off to one decimal and some of the totals do not necessarily add up to exactly 100%.

### 4.2 Results from questionnaires

The questionnaires, consisting of both open and closed questions, were designed for union leadership as discussed in Chapter 3. Section A consisted of background and geographical questions, Section B covered information needs and information seeking behaviour and Section C questions dealt with the specific case of NUMSA. The presentation below follows this format.

**4.3 Section A: Demographic data**

### 4.3.1 Demographic data

Nine questions were designed to collect background and demographic information from the participants. Questions 1 to 6 were designed to provide demographic information. Questions 7 to 9 focused on the respondents as members of a trade union which included the leadership position they occupied.

**4.3.1.1 Gender and age category of the respondents**

In Question 1, respondents were asked to give their age in a range. The use of age ranges was done on account of some people being reluctant to disclose their age. Question 2 determined the gender of respondents. The results are provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Gender and Age

| | **N=71** | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Age of the respondents** | **Gender of the respondents** | | |
| | **Male** | **Female** | **Total** |
| Over 45 | 14 | 3 | 17 |
| | 19.7% | 4.2% | 23.9% |
| 36-45 | 11 | 11 | 22 |
| | 15.5% | 15.5% | 31% |
| 26-35 | 20 | 10 | 30 |
| | 28.2% | 14.1% | 42.3% |
| 18-25 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| | 0% | 2.8% | 2.8% |
| Total | 45 | 26 | 71 |
| | 63.4% | 36.6% | 100% |

With the respondents who responded to the questionnaires 63.4% (45) of the respondents were male and 36.6% (26) were female. Table 1 further shows that the highest number of the respondents 42.3% (30) were from the age group 26-35. The next biggest group was 31% (22) comprising respondents between the ages 36-45. The least represented age group was 18-26 with 2.8% of respondents.

**4.3.1.2 Race of respondents**

Question 3 of the questionnaire asked respondents about their race. The results are provided below in Table 2.

Table 2: Race of respondents

**N=71**

| Race | Frequency | Percentage |
|------|-----------|------------|
| African | 63 | 88.7 |
| Indian | 7 | 9.9 |
| Coloured | 1 | 1.4 |
| **Total** | 71 | 100.0 |

The results show that the large majority of the respondents 63 (88%) were of African race, followed by seven (9.9%) Indians and one (1.4%) Coloured.


**4.3.1.3 Level of education and the language used**

The respondents were asked to specify their level of education in question 3. They could choose from categories namely, never been to school, primary, secondary, or tertiary. In question 4 respondents were asked to indicate the language they mainly used. Table 3 below presents the results to both questions.

Table 3: Level of education and language used

**N=71**

| Level of education | Language mainly used | | Total |
|--------------------|------|---------|-------|
| | Zulu | English | |
| Tertiary | 16 | 28 | 44 |
| | 22.5% | 39.4% | 62% |
| Secondary | 23 | 4 | 27 |
| | 32.4% | 5.6% | 38% |
| **Total** | 39 | 32 | 71 |
| | 54.9% | 45.1% | 100% |

While the results show that all respondents had either tertiary or secondary education, those having a tertiary education were in the majority with 62% (44) respondents indicating this. Of these respondents 39.4% (28) respondents used English as the main language in dealing with union related issues while 22.5% (16) used isiZulu. Interestingly, a higher percentage of respondents with secondary education only, 32.4% (23), used isiZulu as the main language with only 5.6% (4) indicating the use of English. However, it is evident that isiZulu was the language mainly used by a small majority of respondents with 54.9% doing so.

### 4.3.1.4 Reasons for using a particular language

Following from question 5, all respondents were asked in question 6, an open question, to elaborate on why they used a specific language. Fifty seven respondents did so giving a total of 89 reasons. Thirty respondents who used IsiZulu provided 50 responses while 27 respondents who used English provided 39 responses (or reasons).

Table 4 below reflects the responses given by respondents who mainly used IsiZulu and Table 5 the responses who mainly used English.

Table 4: Reasons for using IsiZulu as the main language

**N=30**

| Respondents who mainly used IsiZulu | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Reason for main language used** | **Frequency** | **Percentage** |
| To make information available to members | 15 | 50.0 |
| Majority of members understand the language | 12 | 40.0 |
| To communicate better with fellow members | 10 | 33.3 |
| To accommodate everyone | 7 | 23.3 |
| Members are able to read and write the language | 4 | 13.3 |
| It is a home language | 2 | 6.7 |
| **Total** | 50 | 166.7 |

*\*Multiple responses received*

The results in Table 4 show that the majority of respondents used IsiZulu language to make information available to members with 50% (15) of respondents. This was closely followed

71

by 40% (12) who mentioned the majority of members understand the language as the reason. The third reason given was to communicate better with fellow members mentioned by 33.3% (10) of respondents. Other reasons provided by respondents were to accommodate everyone 23.3% (7), members are able to read and write the language 10.2% (4) and that it was a home language 6.7% (2) of respondents.

Table 5: Reasons for using English as the main language

**N=27**

| Respondents who mainly used English | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Reasons for main language used** | **Frequency** | **Percentage** |
| To make information available to members | 12 | 44.4 |
| To accommodate everyone | 9 | 33.3 |
| Members are able to read and write the language | 7 | 25.9 |
| Majority of members understand the language | 5 | 18.5 |
| To communicate better with fellow members | 4 | 14.8 |
| It is a home language | 2 | 7.4 |
| **Total** | 39 | 144.4 |

**\*Multiple responses received**

The results in the Table 5 show that majority of the respondents used English language to make information available to members with 44.4% (12) of respondents. The second most given reason was to accommodate everyone with 33.3% (9) of respondents. In third place was members able to read and write the language mentioned by 25.9% (7) of respondents.

### 4.3.1.5 Number of years as member of the current union

Question 7 asked the respondents to specify the number of years they have been a member of the union. The results are depicted in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Number of years that a respondent has been a member of the union

**N=71**

| Years | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| 6-9 years | 23 | 32.4 |
| 10-14 years | 19 | 26.8 |
| Zero-5 years | 16 | 22.5 |
| 15-20 years | 11 | 15.5 |
| 21-25 years | 2 | 2.8 |
| **Total** | 71 | 100.0 |

As can be seen in Table 6 a large majority of respondents (77.5%) had been a member of the union for six or more years and the highest number of those 23 (32.4%) falling in the 6-9 years category. Two (2.8%) respondents have been members for between 21 and 25 years while 16 (22.5%) had been members for five years or less.

**4.3.1.6 Membership of another union**

When asked whether they had been members of another union the vast majority 63 (88.7%) respondents indicated that they had not while eight (11.3%) indicated that they had been members.

**4.3.1.7 Leadership position**

Question 9 asked the respondents about their current leadership position occupied at the union. Table 7 below shows the results.

Table 7: Current leadership position

**N=71**

| Leadership position | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Branch Chairperson | 8 | 11.3 |
| Branch Secretary | 8 | 11.3 |
| Regional Chairperson | 8 | 11.3 |
| Shop-steward | 7 | 9.9 |
| Branch Deputy Chairperson | 5 | 7.0 |
| Regional Deputy Chairperson | 5 | 7.0 |
| Branch Para-Legal | 4 | 5.6 |
| Health and Safety Officer | 4 | 5.6 |
| Local Coordinator | 4 | 5.6 |
| Branch Deputy Secretary | 3 | 4.2 |
| Regional Administrator | 3 | 4.2 |
| Regional Deputy Secretary | 3 | 4.2 |
| Regional Secretary | 3 | 4.2 |
| Branch Safey and Liason Officer | 2 | 2.8 |
| Sector Coordinator | 2 | 2.8 |
| Local Organizer | 2 | 2.8 |
| **Total** | 71 | 99.8 |

As can be seen in the Table above a wide range of positions were given. The most frequently occupied positions were Branch Chairperson, Branch Secretary and Regional Chairperson each mentioned by eight (11.3%) respondents respectively. The next most mentioned position was Shop-stewards mentioned by seven (9.9%) respondents. The three least represented leadership positions were Sector Coordinator, Local Organizer, and Branch Safety and Liaison Officer with two (2.8%) respondents each.

**4.4 Section B: Information needs and information seeking behaviour**

The aim of this section is to present the results pertaining to two of the research questions posed in Chapter 1, namely, to establish the information needs of the leadership of unions affiliated to COSATU and, secondly, to establish how the (leadership) obtained the information related to their needs. The former was done via the critical incident approach as reflected below.

### 4.4.1 Major situation or instance when information needed

Question 10 asked respondents to describe a major situation or instance that required him or her to find information in their union environment. The results are indicated in Table 8 below.

Table 8: Major situation or instance (information needed)

**N=71**

| Major situation | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Dismissal cases | 12 | 16.9 |
| Workers benefits | 11 | 15.4 |
| Retrenchment | 10 | 14.0 |
| Workers rights | 10 | 14.0 |
| Union recruitment | 8 | 11.2 |
| Wage negotiations | 6 | 8.4 |
| Labour brokers | 6 | 8.4 |
| Union education | 6 | 8.4 |
| Workers working conditions | 2 | 2.8 |
| **Total** | 71 | 100.0 |

The results from Table 8 show that more than 16% (12) of respondents across the nine unions required information when dealing with dismissal cases. Eleven (15.4%) respondents needed information relating to workers benefits while 10 (14%) respondents mentioned retrenchment and the same number (10) pointed to needing information on workers' rights. With the exception or workers working conditions mentioned by two (2.8%) respondents, all the other situations or instances, namely union recruitment, wage negotiations, labour brokers and union education were mentioned six or eight times.

### 4.4.2 Sources used to solve major situation or need

Question 11 asked respondents about how, where or from whom did they go about finding the information to solve the situation or instance. The findings are reflected in Table 9 below.

Table 9: Sources used to solve situation or instance

**N=71**

| Source consulted | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Employment Legislation | 15 | 21.1 |
| Department of Labour | 14 | 19.7 |
| Upper structure leaders | 13 | 18.3 |
| Union secretary | 10 | 14.0 |
| Employer | 7 | 9.8 |
| CCMA | 7 | 9.8 |
| Union meetings | 4 | 5.6 |
| Internet | 1 | 1.4 |
| **Total** | 71 | 100.0 |

Interestingly, apart from the most and least used source of information, namely employment legislation 15 (21.1%) of respondents and the internet one (1.4%) respondent, all the other sources mentioned would possibly have necessitated face-to-face, verbal or oral communication. The most used of these sources was the Department of Labour, upper structure leaders, and the union secretary mentioned by 14 (19.7%), 13 (18.3%) and 10 (14%) respondents respectively.

### 4.4.3 Success with information source consulted

Question 12 asked the respondent to indicate if they were successful in getting the information they were looking for. More than 90% (64) answered in the affirmative while just over nine percent (7) were not successful in getting the information they were looking for.

### 4.4.3.1 How respondents were successful

Question 13 asked the 64 respondents who answered in the affirmative above to indicate how they were successful in getting the information they were looking for. The respondents provided 76 responses.

Table 10: How respondents were successful

**N=64**

| Reasons | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Able to solve the situation or need | 22 | 34.3 |
| Got positive feedback to those assisted | 16 | 25.0 |
| Information was relevent to the situation | 13 | 20.3 |
| Information was reliable | 11 | 17.1 |
| Able to win the cases of the members | 8 | 12.5 |
| Information was trustworthy to solve the situation | 6 | 9.3 |
| Total | 76 | 118.5 |

**\*Multiple responses received**

Just over 34.3% (22) of respondents said that they were able to solve the situation or need. This was followed by 16 (21.8%) respondents who said they got feedback to those they assisted. The remaining respondents all commented on the information they got and that they were able to win the cases of the members. Of these 13 (20.3%) said the information was relevant, eleven (17.1%) said that it was reliable, eight (12.5%) that they were able to win the cases of their members and six (9.3%) that information was trustworthy to solve the situation.

### 4.4.3.2 Why respondents were not successful in getting information

Question 14 asked the seven respondents who were not successful, why they were not successful in getting the information they were looking for. All seven respondents provided a reason and the reasons with the number of respondents were as follow:

a. Three respondents said that the information was not relevant.

b. Three respondents said that the information was not accessible.

c. One respondent said that the information was not reliable.

## 4.4.4 Sources of information most used by respondents

Question 15**,** a closed question, asked respondents what sources of information they used the most when faced with a need or situation that required information in their union environment**.** Table 11 reflects the sources most used**.**

Table 11: Sources of information most used by respondents

**N=71**

| Sources mostly used | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Union documents | 17 | 23.9 |
| Library | 14 | 19.7 |
| TV and radio | 14 | 19.7 |
| Newspaper | 11 | 15.4 |
| Internet | 5 | 7.0 |
| Colleagues | 4 | 5.6 |
| Books | 3 | 4.2 |
| Magazines | 3 | 4.2 |
| **Total** | 71 | 99.7 |

While more than one source could be chosen each of the respondents specified only one source. The most used source was union documents mentioned by 17 (23.9%) respondents. The same number of respondents, namely 14 (19.7%) used the library on the one hand and TV and radio on the other. The only other source mentioned by more than 10 respondents was the newspaper while the four remaining sources, namely the internet, colleagues, books and magazines were turned to by five or less respondents.

## 4.4.5 If source used address the information need of respondents

Question 16 asked the respondents whether they agreed or not with the statement that the information they got addressed their information needs. Table 12 below provides responses in terms of each of the sources mostly used.

Table 12: If sources mostly used addressed the information need

**N=71**

| Sources Mostly used | Agree | Strongly agree | Disagree | Neutral | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Union documents | 10 | 6 | 0 | 1 | 17 |
| Library | 7 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 14 |
| TV radio | 6 | 5 | 3 | 0 | 14 |
| Newspaper | 9 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 11 |
| Internet | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| Colleagues | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Books | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Magazines | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| **Total** | 41 (57.7%) | 22 (30.9%) | 6 (8.4%) | 2 (2.8%) | 71 (99.8%) |

A substantial majority of respondents (87%) either agreed or strongly agreed that the most used information source addressed their information needs. TV, the newspaper and the internet were the only sources where there was disagreement and the number of respondents expressing such disagreement was small - three or less.

### 4.4.6 Preferred information format

Questions 17 and 18 covered the format in which information was conveyed and the reason why the format was preferred**.** Respondents were asked which information format they preferred in relation to satisfying their information needs in the union environment and the reason/s for that preference. Table 13 reflects the format preferred in frequencies and percentages.

Table 13:  Format preferred

**N=71**

| Format preferred | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Print | 28 | 39.4 |
| Verbal | 21 | 29.5 |
| Electronic | 14 | 19.7 |
| Audio-visual | 8 | 11.2 |
| **Total** | 71 | 100.0 |

The Print format was the most preferred format with 28 (39.4%) respondents indicating this. This was closely followed by the verbal form with 21 (29.5%) respondents. The remaining 14 (19.7%) indicated their preference for the electronic format and eight (11.2%) for audio-visual.

Question 18 covered the reasons for selecting an information format by respondents.

- In terms of the print format, out of 28 respondents, 17 respondents pointed to its reliability, six cited accessibility and five mentioned trustworthiness
- With the verbal format, 11 respondents mentioned the format's ability to address information needs on time, five cited the format's convenience for users and three mentioned its reliability
- With the electronic format, out of 14 respondents, eight pointed to its convenience, while four mentioned its usability and two stated that it easy to make information available
- In terms of the audio-visual format, six out of eight respondents mentioned its accessibility and two pointed to its convenience.

## 4.4.7 Challenges faced by respondents when looking for information and ways to address the challenges

In questions 19 and 20 respondents were asked to provide the challenges they face when looking or searching for information relating to their trade union work and ways to address the challenges. The results are provided in Tables 14 and 15 with the former listing the challenges and the latter the ways to address the challenges. Out of 71 respondents 57 answered the question and 14 did not.

Table 14: Challenges faced when looking for information

**N=71**

| Challenges | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Lack of information accessibility | 21 | 29.6 |
| Information disorganization | 19 | 26.8 |
| Information not updated | 14 | 19.7 |
| No response | 14 | 19.7 |
| Lack of internet access | 11 | 15.5 |
| No one to assist with information | 10 | 14.1 |
| Information irrelevant | 8 | 11.3 |
| Confidentiality | 5 | 7.0 |
| **Total** | 102 | 143.7 |

**\*Multiple responses received**

The responses varied and there was no single challenge mentioned by more than a third of respondents. The most mentioned challenge, namely information not being accessible was specified by 29.6% (21) of respondents. This was closely followed by information disorganization with 26.8% (19) and information not updated with 19.7% (14) of respondents. Confidentiality was the least mentioned challenge with five (7%) respondents.

The 57 respondents who listed a challenge/s were then asked what they thought should be done to address the challenge/s. A total of 68 responses were received and the results are depicted in Table 15 below.

Table 15: Ways to address the challenges

**N=57**

| Ways to address the challenges | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Acquire updated information | 22 | 38.6 |
| More union meetings | 17 | 29.8 |
| Have an open policy on information | 11 | 19.2 |
| Affordable internet subscription | 8 | 14.0 |
| Employ qualified information officer | 5 | 8.7 |
| Store and protect information | 3 | 5.2 |
| Update union websites | 2 | 3.5 |
| **Total** | 68 | 119.0 |

*\*Multiple responses received*

Of the various ways to address the challenges put forward by respondents, the most mentioned were Acquire updated information with 22 (38.6%) respondents, more union meetings 17 (29.8%) respondents, and have an open policy on information 11 (19.2%) respondents. Two of the less mentioned ways had to do with the internet and interestingly five (8.7%) respondents suggested the need to employ a qualified information officer.

### 4.4.8 Methods/ mechanisms of information provision most useful

In question 21, a closed question, respondents were asked to choose the most useful method or mechanism of information provision in making information available to union members. The respondents were allowed to choose more than one method but not more than three. Table 16 below provides the results.

Table 16: Methods/ mechanisms most useful

**N=71**

| Method or mechanism | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------|-----------|------------|
| Face-to-face | 28 | 39.4 |
| Union Secretary reports | 21 | 29.5 |
| Television | 19 | 26.7 |
| Newspapers | 17 | 23.9 |
| Books | 13 | 18.3 |
| Radio | 11 | 15.4 |
| Emails | 8 | 11.2 |
| Social media | 8 | 11.2 |
| Magazines | 6 | 8.4 |
| **Total** | 131 | 184.5 |

**\*Multiple responses received**

The results show that 39.4% (28) of respondents considered face-to-face to be the most useful method or mechanisms in making information available to union members. Union secretary reports mentioned by 29.5% (21) of respondents being the second most considered mechanism or method. The third method or mechanism considered useful was television with 26.7% (19) of respondents and newspapers mentioned by 17 (23.9%). social media and emails with eight (11.2%) respondents each and magazines with six (8.4%) respondents were the methods considered least useful.

**4.4.8.1 Reasons for choosing a particular method**

In question 22 respondents were asked to explain why they considered the method/s indicated in Table 16 to be more useful. Sixty four respondents gave a total of 97 reasons. As can be seen in Table 17 below, six reasons emerged from the analysis of the 97 responses and these are linked to the particular method indicated.

Table 17: Reasons why the method considered more useful

**N=64**

| Method | Reason why method used | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | It is reliable | Provide updated and relevant information | Help leaders to interact with members | It is accessible | Used for quick communication | Get information available to members | Total |
| Face-to-Face | 13 | 5 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 28 |
| Union Secretary reports | 4 | 4 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 18 |
| Television | 4 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 15 |
| Newspaper | 2 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 10 |
| Books | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 8 |
| Radio | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 7 |
| Emails | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| Social media | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 4 |
| Magazines | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| **Total** | 29 (45.3%) | 19 (29.6%) | 16 (25%) | 14 (21.8%) | 12 (18.7%) | 9 (14 %) | 97 (151.5%) |

**\*Multiple responses received**

As can be seen in Table 17 above, reliability was the most mentioned reason for considering a method or mechanism useful – mentioned by 29 (45.3%) of respondents. This was followed by a method being able to provide updated and relevant information - 19 (29.6%) respondents. The least mentioned reason was the method getting information available to members - nine (14%) respondents.

Face-to-face communication was seen as reliable by the highest number of respondents, namely 13 (20.3%) and had the highest number of respondents referring to it being able to provide updated and relevant information (five respondents) and being able to help leadership interact with members (eight respondents). Interestingly, the method was not seen as accessible or being used for quick communication. The reasons given for why Union Secretary reports and television were considered more useful were quite similar across all reason categories. Understandably, email, social media and magazines, given their position in Table 16, elicited few reasons from respondents.

### 4.4.9 Method/s or mechanism/s mainly used to provide information

Question 23 asked the respondents which information provision method/s or mechanism/s they mainly used to provide information to other members in the union environment. The results are provided in Table 18 below.

Table 18: Method/s or mechanism/s mainly used

**N=71**

| Method or mechanism | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------|-----------|------------|
| General meetings | 27 | 38.0 |
| Union secretary | 16 | 22.5 |
| Face-to-face | 13 | 18.3 |
| Social media | 9 | 12.6 |
| Fax | 6 | 8.4 |
| **Total** | 71 | 99.8 |

The method mainly used by union leadership to provide information to their members was general meetings mentioned by 27 (38%) respondents. The next mainly used method was quite far behind and was the Union secretary stated by 17 (22.5%) respondents. The third, which like the first two, also involved verbal or oral communication was face-to-face mentioned by 18.3% of respondents and this was followed by social media with 12.6% of respondents.

### 4.4.9.1 Advantages of information provision method or mechanism

Question 24 asked the respondents to explain why the particular method was used. This question was to determine the main advantages of the method used by the respondents. Forty two of the respondents provided one or more explanations and a total of 78 responses were given and 29 respondents did not answer the question. Tables 19 to 22 below list the advantages of each method.

Table 19: Advantages of General meetings

**N=28**

| Advantage/s of General meetings | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Reliable | 15 | 35.7 |
| Allow leaders to interact with members | 8 | 19.0 |
| Provide immediate answers | 5 | 11.9 |
| **Total** | 28 | 66.6 |

The advantages of using general meetings were their reliability mentioned by 15 (35.7%) respondents, leadership interaction with members - eight (19%) respondents and the provision of immediate answers - five (11.9%) respondents.

Table 20: Advantage/s of Union secretary

**N=20**

| Advantage/s of Union secretary | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Reliable | 11 | 26.1 |
| Accessible | 5 | 11.9 |
| Provide immediate answers | 3 | 7.1 |
| Method is user friendly | 1 | 2.3 |
| **Total** | 20 | 47.6 |

In terms of the Union secretary, respondents pointed to various advantages. Eleven (26.1%) respondents pointed to the reliability of Union secretaries and five (11.9%) to their accessibility.

Table 21: Advantages of Face-to-face

**N=17**

| Advantage/s of Face-to-face | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Reliable | 8 | 19.0 |
| Allow leaders to interact with members | 7 | 16.6 |
| Provide immediate answers | 2 | 4.7 |
| **Total** | 17 | 40.4 |

The most mentioned advantages of the face-to-face method were reliability and allowing leaders to interact with members mentioned by eight (19%) and seven 16.6%) respondents respectively.

Table 22: Advantages of Social media

**N=10**

| Advantage/s of Social media | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Quick to provide information | 3 | 7.1 |
| Allow leaders to interact with members | 2 | 4.7 |
| Provide immediate answers | 2 | 4.7 |
| User friendly | 2 | 4.7 |
| Accessible | 1 | 2.3 |
| **Total** | 10 | 23.8 |

In terms of social media, as can be seen from Table 22 above, no one advantage was mentioned by more than 10% of the 42 respondents.

The lastly method or mechanism that was pointed to was fax. Two (4.7%) respondents used the method for quick provision of information and one (2.3%) for its accessibility.

### 4.4.9.2 Disadvantages of the information provision method of mechanism

Question 25 asked the respondents to provide what they considered to be the disadvantages of the information provision method of mechanism to provide information to members. The results are provided below in relation to the method mainly used. There were 31 respondents of the 71 who answered the question and provided the 58 responses.

Table 23: Disadvantages of General meetings

**N=31**

| Disadvantage/s of General meetings | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Time consuming | 22 | 70.9 |
| Lack of attendance | 8 | 25.8 |
| Disturbance of meetings | 5 | 16.1 |
| **Total** | 35 | 112.9 |

**\*Multiple responses received**

The most significant disadvantage of General meetings as an information provision method was that they were Time consuming pointed to by 22 (70.9%) respondents. The Lack of attendance at meetings was mentioned by eight (25.8%) respondents.

Table 24: Disadvantages of Union secretary

**N=13**

| Disadvantage/s of Union secretary | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Unavailability | 8 | 25.8 |
| Lack of access to confidential documents | 5 | 16.1 |
| **Total** | 13 | 41.9 |

The aspects of unavailability and the lack of access to confidential documents were the two disadvantages mentioned in relation to the union secretary as an information provision "method" mentioned by eight (25.8%) and five (16.1%) respondents respectively.

The Face-to-face method was considered time consuming by seven (22.5%) respondents and exhausting by five (16.1%) respondents.

Table 25 below reflects the disadvantages associated with social media. As can be seen the two most mentioned disadvantages were lack of internet access and data costs - both mentioned by four (12.9%) respondents.

Table 25: Disadvantages of Social media

**N=10**

| Disadvantage/s of Social media | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| No internet access on cellphones | 4 | 12.9 |
| Costly in terms data | 4 | 12.9 |
| Untrustworthy | 2 | 6.4 |
| **Total** | 10 | 32.2 |

Finally, in terms of fax as a method or mechanism, one (3.2%) respondent mentioned that the method is outdated in terms of the new technology.

### 4.4.10 Type of information provided to union members

Question 26 asked the respondents to indicate the type of information they provide to union members. The question was a closed one and a range of possibilities were given.

Respondents were allowed to choose more than one type of information from the list. The results are provided below in Table 26.

Table 26: Type of information provided to union members

**N=71**

| Type of information provided to members | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Wage increment | 28 | 39.4 |
| Congress resolutions | 20 | 28.1 |
| Job advertisement | 16 | 22.5 |
| Union campaigns | 16 | 22.5 |
| Union constitution | 14 | 19.7 |
| Union meetings and agendas | 14 | 19.7 |
| Union leadership speeches | 12 | 16.9 |
| Collective bargaining resolutions | 8 | 11.2 |
| Changes in labour legislation and policies | 4 | 5.6 |
| Union month fees | 2 | 2.8 |
| **Total** | 134 | 188.4 |

\***Multiple responses received**

The results above show that the most common information provided was wage increments with 28 (39.4%) of respondents indicating this. The next most provided information was that related to congress resolutions mentioned by 20 (28.1%) respondents. Information on changes in labour legislation and on union monthly fees were the categories least mentioned - four (5.6%) and two (2.8%) respondents respectively.

### 4.4.11 Format in which information is mainly made available to members

Question 27 asked the respondents to indicate the format in which the information they provide is mainly made available to other union members.

Table 27: Format in which information is mainly made available to members

**N=71**

| Format/s | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------|-----------|------------|
| Print | 33 | 46.4 |
| Verbal | 28 | 39.4 |
| Electronic | 6 | 8.4 |
| Audio-visual | 4 | 5.6 |
| **Total** | 71 | 100.0 |

Information was mainly made available in print format mentioned by 33 (46.4%) respondents. This was closely followed by the verbal format with 28 (39.4%) respondents. The least mentioned format was audio-visual with four (5.6%) respondents.

Question 28 of the questionnaire solicited the reason for indicating the above format. Some respondents gave more than one reason. Tables 28 to 31 below provide the reasons for using a specific format.

Table 28: Reason/s for using the print format

**N=33**

| Reason/s | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------|-----------|------------|
| Accessible | 15 | 45.4 |
| Easy transfer of information | 12 | 36.3 |
| Reliable | 9 | 27.2 |
| It is effective | 6 | 18.1 |
| **Total** | 42 | 127.2 |

**\*Multiple responses received**

Reasons for using the print format ranged from accessibility mentioned by 15 (45.4%) of the 33 respondents, to its being effective mentioned by six (18.1%) respondents. The second most mentioned reason was that it facilitated the transfer of information – 12 (36.3%) respondents.

Table 29: Reason/s for using the verbal format

**N=28**

| Reason/s | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Easy transfer of information | 13 | 42.8 |
| Convenient | 9 | 32.1 |
| Reliable | 7 | 25.0 |
| It is effective | 5 | 17.8 |
| **Total** | 34 | 121.4 |

**\*Multiple responses received**

In terms of the verbal format the two main reasons provided by the respondents were easy transfer of information and convenience mentioned by 13 (42.8%) and nine (32.1%) respondents respectively.

Table 30: Reason/s for using electronic format

**N=6**

| Reason/s | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Easy transfer of information | 5 | 83.3 |
| Convenient | 3 | 50.0 |
| It is efficient | 2 | 33.3 |
| **Total** | 10 | 166.6 |

**\*Multiple responses received**

The vast majority, 83.3% of the small number of respondents who used the electronic format pointed to the easy transfer of information as the reason for using the format.

Table 31: Reason/s for using the audio-visual format

**N=4**

| Reason/s | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------|-----------|------------|
| Accessible | 3 | 75.0 |
| Convenient | 2 | 50.0 |
| It is efficient | 2 | 50.0 |
| It is effective | 2 | 50.0 |
| **Total** | 9 | 222.0 |

**\*Multiple responses received**

In terms of the audio-visual format, three of the four (75%) respondents used it mainly for accessibility. Other reasons were convenience, efficiency and effectiveness all mentioned by two (50%) respondents.

## 4.4.12 Situation or context information is provided

Question 29, an open question, asked respondents to provide the situation or context in which the information is usually provided to union members. The results are provided in Table 32 below.

Table 32: Situation or context information is provided

**N=71**

| Context(s) | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------|-----------|------------|
| Mass meetings and sites visits | 28 | 39.4 |
| Shop-steward Council meetings | 19 | 26.8 |
| Branch General meetings | 9 | 12.7 |
| Recruitment Campaigns | 7 | 9.8 |
| Regional Council meetings | 5 | 7.0 |
| Union Congresses | 3 | 4.2 |
| **Total** | 71 | 100.0 |

The results show that 39.4% (28) of respondents used mass meetings and site visits as the context in which to provide information to union members. Nineteen (26.8%) of

respondents used Shop-steward Council meetings. These are two most used contexts for information provision mentioned and both are mentioned by more than twice the number of respondents than the next mentioned contexts, namely, Branch General Meetings. The least used context mentioned by three (4.2%) respondents was the union congress and this is understandable given that such congresses take place once a year or in every two to five years.

### 4.4.13 Challenges faced in providing information to union members

Question 30 asked the respondents specify the challenges they faced when providing information to members. Out of 71 respondents 67 answered the question providing 97 responses and four did not respond.

Table 33: Challenges faced when providing information to members

**N=71**

| Challenges faced when providing information | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Meetings are time consuming | 26 | 36.6 |
| Members do not attend meetings | 21 | 29.6 |
| Lack of participation in meetings | 18 | 25.4 |
| Union divisions | 15 | 21.1 |
| Meetings discruption | 11 | 15.5 |
| Technological limitations | 6 | 8.6 |
| No response | 4 | 5.6 |
| **Total** | 101 | 142.3 |

**\*Multiple responses received**

The most mentioned challenge concerned various aspects of meetings. Firstly, 26 (36.6%) of respondents mentioned that meetings are time consuming. This was followed by 21 (29.6%) who said that members do not attend meetings and the lack of membership participation in meetings mentioned by 18 (25.4%) respondents. Other challenges pointed to included union divisions mentioned by 15 (21.1%) respondents and 11 (15.5%) respondents pointed to the disruption of meetings. Technological limitations were the least pointed to challenge mentioned by six (8.5%) of respondents.

### 4.4.14 What can be done to address the challenges?

In question 31 respondents were asked to provide solutions to address the challenges faced when providing information to union members. There were 32 respondents and each provided a comment. These comments are reflected below.

- Twelve respondents said that they, the union leadership, should not wait for general meetings to provide information to members
- Nine respondents said that it is important for union leadership to explore the use of other forms of communication like social media to provide information to union members
- Seven respondents held that the union leadership must exercise discipline to those members who do not come to meetings and those who disrupt meetings
- Four respondents stated that union leadership must encourage other fellow members to buy cellphones with email and social media capabilities to easily cascade information to them.

The use of technology and social media in particular are interesting ones and this aspect is further investigated in the section that follows.

## 4.5 Section C: Union leadership and social media

In the final section of the questionnaire respondents were asked to focus specifically, in terms of information provision, on the then current crisis regarding the trade union NUMSA`s expulsion from COSATU. This was followed by various questions relating to the significance of social media for union leaders.

### 4.5.1 Sources used to get information relating to the crisis

In question 32, an open question, respondents were asked to provide the sources of information they were using to get information relating to the crisis. The 65 respondents who answered the question provided 98 responses. The sources used are reflected in Table 34 below.

Table 34: Sources used in relation to the crisis

**N=71**

| Sources used | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Television | 23 | 32.4 |
| Newspaper | 19 | 26.8 |
| COSATU CEC meetings | 15 | 21.1 |
| Upper structures of the union | 14 | 19.7 |
| Radio | 11 | 15.5 |
| Internet | 9 | 12.7 |
| Social media | 7 | 9.9 |
| No response | 6 | 8.5 |
| **Total** | 104 | 146.6 |

*__Multiple responses received__

The results in Table 34 show that 32.4% (23) of respondents used television to get information in relation to the NUMSA crisis. The next most used source was Newspapers with 26.8% (19) of respondents doing so. The internet and social media were the sources least used by respondents with 12 .7% (9) and 9.9% (7) of respondents doing so.

### 4.5.2 Reasons for using sources

Question 33 asked the respondents to provide reasons why they used the sources indicated in question 32. The following reasons where provided.

a) Of the 23 respondents who said they used television, 11 stated that the source (TV) is accessible and eight stated that they used the source to get updated information relating to the crisis while four referred to the source as reliable.

b) Of the 19 respondents who said they used newspapers, 10 respondents used the source to get updated information relating to the crisis while six cited that is accessible and three stated that it is relevant for union leadership.

c) With the 15 respondents who said they used COSATU CEC meetings seven cited to get updated information relating to the crisis, five stated that it is accessible and three stated that it is trustworthy. Three stated that it is recommended by the union.

d) Of the 14 respondents who said they used upper structures of the union eight stated that it is reliable, four said that it is trustworthy and two stated that they used the source to get updated information relating to the crisis.

e) Of the eleven respondents who said they used radio, six used it to get updated information to the crisis, four said it is accessible and one said everyone used it.

f) There were nine respondents who had used the internet. Of these, five stated that they used this source to get updated information relating to the crisis. Three said it is accessible and one said it is relevant to union leadership.

g) Lastly, of the seven respondents who said they used social media, three stated that the source is used by everyone; three stated that it is accessible and one said to get information updates.

### 4.5.3 Format information relating to the crisis mostly in

Question 34 asked the respondents to provide the format in which the information relating to the crisis was mostly in. Forty eight respondents did so with some giving more than one format. The results are presented in Table 35 below.

Table 35: Format in which information mostly in

**N=48**

| Format/s | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Audio-visual | 24 | 50.0 |
| Print | 19 | 39.6 |
| Audio | 14 | 29.2 |
| Verbal | 9 | 18.8 |
| Digital | 5 | 10.4 |
| **Total** | 71 | 147.9 |

**\*Multiple responses received**

The results show that half of the respondents 50% (24) used the audio-visual format. The next most used format was print with 39.6% (19) of respondents doing so. Audio was mentioned by 29.2% (14) of respondents and verbal and digital formats were the least selected ones used by nine (18.8%) and five (10.4%) respondents respectively.

### 4.5.4 How in the main are respondents providing information related to the crisis to their members?

In question 35 respondents were asked how they were, in the main, providing information relating to the crisis to their members. The results are provided below in Table 36.

Table 36: How in the main the respondents are providing information related to the crisis to their members.

**N=71**

| How information was provided | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Branch General meetings | 15 | 21.1 |
| Mass meetings | 14 | 19.7 |
| Shop-steward Council meetings | 12 | 16.9 |
| Emails | 10 | 14.1 |
| Social media | 9 | 12.7 |
| Regional meetings | 5 | 7.0 |
| Telephonically | 5 | 7.0 |
| Fax | 1 | 1.4 |
| **Total** | **71** | **100.0** |

The results show that the most of the ways used to provide information to members involved the verbal format through meetings. Fifteen (21.1%) respondents used Branch General Meetings followed by 19% (14) of respondents who used Mass meetings and 16% (12) of respondents who used Shop-stewards Council meetings to provide information relating to the crisis. Emails with 14% (10) of respondents and Social media 12.6% (9) of respondents were also used to some extent.

As part of question 35 respondents, as mentioned, were also asked why they used that format.  Out of 71 respondents, 35 responses were received and these are reflected below.

- Of the 12 respondents who said they used Branch General meetings, six used the format  for its reliability, four said it is trustworthy and two stated that the method is effective
- Of the nine respondents who said they used Mass meetings, four said that they used the format  for its reliability, three used it for easy communication and two stated that they used the format  to provide updated information to members
- Of the seven respondents who said they used the Shop-steward Council meetings, three said that they used the format to  get information available to other fellow members, while two said that they used the  format to allow leadership interaction and the remaining two stated that they used it for its reliability

- Of the four respondents who said they used emails, two stated that they used the format to easily communicate the information, one stated that the format  is effective and one said that it is efficient

- Both respondents who stated the use of regional meetings referred to their reliability

- The one respondent who mentioned the telephone, stated that the format is effective and efficient.

### 4.5.5 Role of Social media

In question 36 respondents were asked what role they thought social media could play in providing information to union members. Forty two respondents replied and responses were as follows:

- Social media is able to provide updated information to members - 16 respondents

- Social media can be used to make information available from one user to another - 11 respondents

- Since people have cellphones it makes it easier to provide information quick and efficiently - nine respondents

- Social media is able to provide information to a widespread population very easily - six respondents.

### 4.5.6 Respondents' use of social media to provide information to members

Question 37 asked respondents if they have used social media networks to provide information to union members. The results are provided in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Social media network used to provide information to union members

**N=71**

If respondents used social media
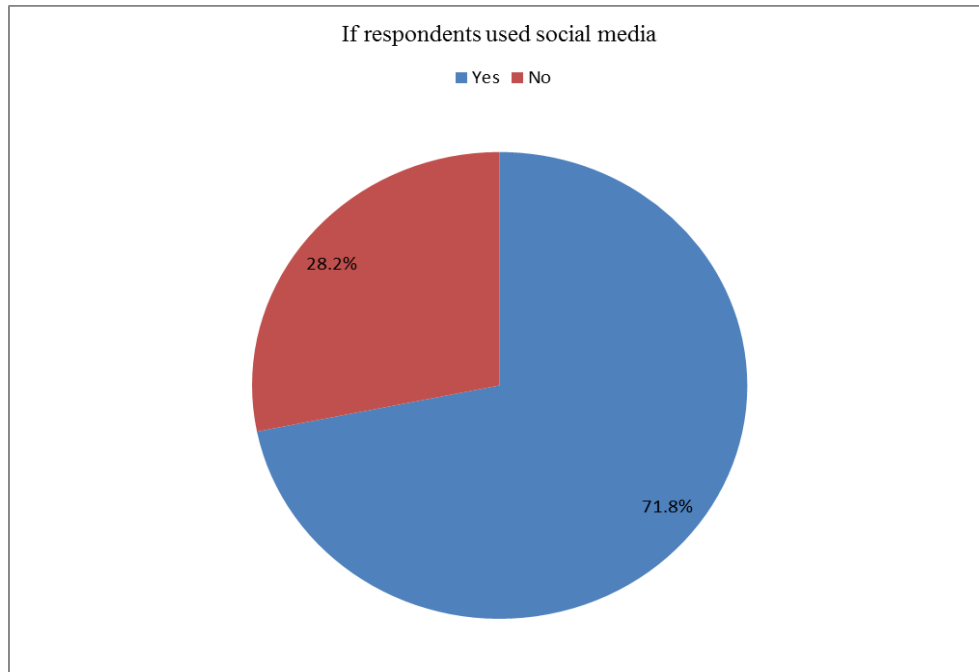
The results indicate that a majority of respondents 71.8% (51) had indeed used social media as a means to provide information to members.

### 4.5.7 Type of social media network used to provide information to members

Question 38 asked the 51 respondents who answered in the affirmative above to provide the application used to provide information to union members. The results are reflected in Table 37.

Table 37: Type of social media network used to provide information to members

**N=51**

| Social network used | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------|-----------|------------|
| WhatsApp            | 28        | 54.9       |
| Facebook            | 25        | 49.0       |
| Twitter             | 18        | 35.2       |
| Youtube             | 11        | 21.5       |
| Instagram           | 8         | 15.6       |
| **Total**           | 90        | 176.2      |

**\*Multiple responses received**

The results show that majority 54.9% (28) of respondents used WhatsApp, followed by 49% (25) of respondents who used Facebook, while 35.2% (14) of respondents used Twitter. The least used applications were YouTube and Instagram with 21.5% (11) and 15.6% (8) of respondents respectively.

The 20 respondents who said they had not used social media did not state why as asked in question 39.

### 4.5.8 Whether application used was successful

In question 40 the respondents were asked to indicate whether the application used to provide information to union members was successful. The results are reflected in Table 38.

Table 38: Application successful

**N=51**

| Social network used | If respondents successful | | Total |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | Yes | No | |
| WhatsApp | 16 | 0 | 16 |
| | 31.3% | 0% | 31.3% |
| Facebook | 13 | 0 | 13 |
| | 25.3% | 0% | 25.3% |
| Twitter | 9 | 0 | 9 |
| | 17.6% | 0% | 17.6% |
| Youtube | 7 | 2 | 9 |
| | 13.7% | 3.9% | 17.6% |
| Instagram | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| | 7.8% | 0% | 7.8% |
| Total | 49 | 2 | 51 |
| | 96% | 3.9% | 100% |

The results show that majority of the respondents 96% (49) were successful in providing information using their social media applications, while only 3.9% (2) said they were not successful.

Question 41 asked those respondents who said that using social media to provide information was successful to elaborate.

## 4.5.9 Reasons for social media use being successful

There were 56 responses received from the 49 respondents and these are summarized below:

- Social media networks allow communicating information from one user to another - 18 respondents
- Social media networks are important because they allow for updating one another with relevant information - 15 respondents
- Social media networks assist in the distribution of information to a significant number of users – 11 respondents
- Social media networks are user friendly - eight respondents
- Social media is very convenient to most people - four respondents.

## 4.5.10 If respondents would like to see the union using social media networks more?

Question 42 asked all respondents if they would like to see the union using social media networks more as a means of providing information to members. The results are provided in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: If social media to be used more

**N=71**
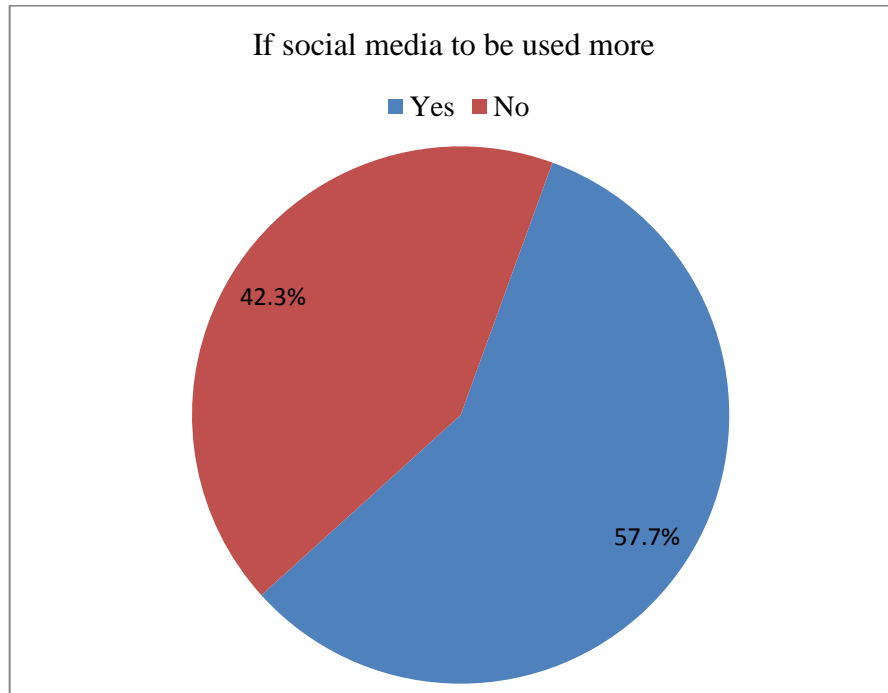


The results show that a small majority of respondents 57.7% (41) saw a need for more use of social media networks in providing information to union members.

### 4.5.11 Elaboration on using social media networks more

Question 43 asked respondents to elaborate why they would like to see the union use social media networks more as a means of providing information to members. There were 27 respondents who answered and their comments are provided below.

- Social media networks further contribute in the ability of the union to provide information to its members - nine respondents
- Social media networks are important methods of communicating information - six respondents
- Social media networks are increasingly taking over from print sources of information and there is need for adaptation - six respondents

- Union members are becoming younger thus a need to relate with what can assist them in getting information easily - four respondents
- Unions must use social media to their advantage in improving the level of information flow - two respondents.

**4.5.12 Further comments concerning information seeking and dissemination by trade union leadership**

In question 44, the final question, respondents were asked if there was anything they would like to add anything concerning information seeking and dissemination by trade union leadership. Twenty one respondents commented and their comments were as follows.

- Information empowers members and it must be made accessible to them - six respondents
- Leadership of the union must always address the information needs and intervene where necessary - four respondents
- Members must be able to use other forms of information sources like television, radio and read books for more knowledge - four respondents
- The union must intensify its political classes to enhance information accessibility to members - three respondents
- Leaders must put in place mechanisms that will assist in improving access to information to union members - two respondents
- Members must gain confidence by getting more valid and reliable information from their leadership - two respondents.

**Part Two: Interview results**

**4.6 General information**

Qualitative data obtained from the interviews were analysed and interpreted and subsequently presented in this section. The interview comprised a total of 17 open questions and 18 union leaders representing the nine unions were interviewed. The union leaders interviewed were all responsible for handling and disseminating information to members and were purposively selected by the researcher after consultation with union secretaries. The results from the interviews are presented according to the order of the questions in the interviews schedule (see Appendix 4). Interviewees were asked in what language they would prefer the interview to be conducted in and, in the main, English was used. All the interviews were recorded and permission to do so was obtained from each of the respondents.

### 4.6.1 Role of information to union members

The respondents were asked about the role of information in their unions. Eight respondents pointed out that union leaders do take care of information that seeks to help union members and that helps to achieve their goals as leaders and the goals of the union as a whole. This important information according to three respondents can relate "to financial benefits of union members, medical benefits and most of the time it relates to the employment related matters of union members". Five respondents emphasized the role of information being to benefit the "union members" to address their concerns. However, four respondents observed that the information was also of benefit to non-members. One respondent pointed out that the union information has a "life cycle" where the information survives because of its relevance for the union. What emerged from responses is that information helps the union achieve its goals and subsequently helps the members to achieve their goals. It was also noted by two of the eight respondents first mentioned above, that the information is always assessed by leadership to see if it meets the necessary needs of the union members. Information that is not relevant to the interests of the union is discarded.

### 4.6.2 The need to address the information needs of union members

Respondents were asked how they saw the need to address the information needs of union members. Seven respondents stated that unions are more effective when the needs of the members are attended to, addressed and are given feedback on their requests. According to one of the respondents, this results in union members being "happy and inclined to recruit others to join the union." A second respondent stated that in addressing union members` needs "there is a need for information feedback". Therefore, for an information need of union members to be addressed needs an active leadership to address the needs immediately. As pointed out by the respondent, "information feedback"- that is leadership responding to a (information) need of a member helps the individual member to effectively and efficiently deal with the need and move on. The respondent emphasized that if the need is urgent the information feedback must be urgently given. One respondent made the point that feedback cannot always be given immediately stating that "some information cannot be urgently given since some information needs require thorough search and in-depth feedback."

### 4.6.3 Sources of information most important for union members

The respondents were asked about the sources of information that are important for union members in getting information for their needs. Half of the respondents (nine) made the point that any information that contributes to the "betterment" of the union and its members is important "regardless" of the source. But it was further pointed out by one respondent that "a test of validity and reliability" must also be considered for any information given as many people or other organizations use the vulnerability of union workers for their own self-gain. Two of the nine respondents considered it important to have union leadership at the centre of information provision to members and that such provision was a "mandated service of every leader" underpinned by the union policies and constitution.

### 4.6.4 The relationship between union leadership and employers in relation to information provision

Respondents were asked about their relationship with employers in terms of information provision. Consensus was that both the union leaders and employers must work together in exchanging the necessary information in addressing various kinds of information needs that may arise, whether from employees, employers or by union leaders. It was noted by six respondents that union leaders do enquire and require information about their members from their employers concerning death and retrenchment, benefits, dismissals and working conditions generally. As one respondent put it "to know where we as the union are improving and where we still need to be improving we must know what causes death, retrenchments, dismissals and working condition of our members". It was further pointed out by respondents that not only employers must have the right to know about employees but the unions have a right to know about their members who are the employees.

### 4.6.5 Information provision amongst the union leadership

In response to the question "What is the role of information provision among the union leadership?" two respondents referred to such provision as "a cornerstone of a united collective and a progressing union beyond political differences that may emerge overtime." It was evident from responses given that union leadership used information provision amongst their structures to unite union leaders beyond their political differences that may arise over time. However, the point was also made that those political differences may emerge where information provision is problematic. Another respondent described information provision amongst the leadership "as a way of showing maturity and trust to fellow leaders."

Generally, it was apparent from the responses that respondents considered information provision as an important factor in their unity as union leadership.

### 4.6.6 State of infrastructure and equipment for rendering information services

The respondents were asked about the state of infrastructure and equipment that help the union to provide information services. The majority, 12 of the respondents, stated that such infrastructure and equipment were unavailable. Internet access via union computers was described as expensive while at the same time four of the 12 respondents pointed out that many of their computers which had been affected by load-shedding had still not been fixed. One respondent noted that "Unions are big bodies of people but remain poor organs without necessary resources to render information services that can equip their members".

### 4.6.7 Role of union education in information provision

Respondents were asked about the role of union education (also known as political classes) in information provision. It was clear from the responses that union education not only benefited union leadership but also general members. As stated by one respondent, "Union education shapes political ideology and one understands things deeper and clearer". Union education according to a second respondent provided updated information on the political and economic situation of South Africa and the world.

A follow up question asked how often such union education took place and who was responsible for providing the classes. Eight respondents referred to upper structure leadership being responsible in both organizing and leading such education. It was also clear that the union secretary at branch and regional level organized other logistics such as venues, transport and refreshments. It was pointed out that these classes, depending on the upper structure leadership, may occur quarterly or when the need arises.

### 4.6.8 Training related to information needs and seeking

Respondents were asked about any form of training provided by their union related to information needs and seeking. Responses indicated that no training in this regard had been given. However, 10 respondents did make the point that they as leadership did understand the majority of their own needs and the needs of their members. A further respondent cited the need to have more information resources available to respond to their information seeking citing the lack of infrastructure and equipment pertaining to information services.

### 4.6.9 The current initiatives of information provision

The respondents were asked about the current initiatives of information provision to union members. The following initiatives were mentioned:

- Mid-term conferences (non-elective) aiming to report back to members what has to be done and what needs to be improved on - five respondents
- The use of social media pages e.g. Facebook and Twitter of the union to exchange information with members - five respondents
- Compulsory union education to be attended by all members and newly recruited members which will be a mechanism to provide information on current issues and debates around employment conditions, and economic and socio-political issues - three respondents
- Publishing of a newsletter with the aim of reporting on both domestic and international living conditions of workers across the world - two respondents.

### 4.6.10 Awareness of members of the initiatives

In a follow up question respondents were asked whether membership was aware of the information provision initiatives mentioned. All respondents said that members were aware. In elaborating, respondents pointed to the strategies used to make members aware of the initiatives and these were as follows:

- Using the membership roll to send SMSs - 16 respondents
- Posters and pamphlets advertising e.g. new union social group and how to join the group - eight respondents
- Doing site visits inviting union members and potential members to attend union education classes and various union workshops - eight respondents
- Using word of mouth (face-to-face) - six respondents
- Working with other unions and organizations to spread information to members and non-members - four respondents.

### 4.6.11 Importance of media briefing in sending information to members

The respondents were asked to comment on the importance of media briefings to provide information to members. All respondents agreed on their importance. However, while one respondent was of the opinion that the use of media briefings was good for the efficient spread of information,  five respondents pointed to briefings not involving or providing an opportunity for interaction with membership. As one respondent put it, "It is only journalists who can be able to ask questions for the information given but membership are informed after." It was also noted by three respondents that when media briefings were used as a form of spreading important information it was important to not "surprise members" with information they were not expecting or that had not been discussed in union structures.

### 4.6.12 Importance of social media like Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp in information seeking and dissemination

In their responses to the question on social media the respondents acknowledged the increasing number of social media networks as well as the opportunities given by social media to make information available to and across members. However, 12 respondents made the point that their unions were still not using these social media networks to their fullest potential. In accounting for this, respondents referred to the mistrust of information rendered by social media as well as the lack of security with regard to sensitive information being accessed by people from outside the union.

### 4.6.13 Challenges in getting information across

The respondents were asked about the challenges they encountered when making information available to members. The respondents provided the following challenges:

- Language barriers where members do not understand a certain language and thus unable to understand a particular message or information given - 10 respondents
- Literacy levels - although information is available in certain pieces of paper and other union documentations including newsletters, not all members were literate or their skills level was such that reading was a challenge - eight respondents

- Failure by members to attend union programmes. This included union meetings and union education classes. Therefore members missed out on much of the information that was provided by leadership in such contexts - eight respondents

- Internet access by the unions was considered expensive - four respondents. And, linked to this,

    Limited resources such as money, innovation and skills - two respondents.

### 4.6.14 Addressing the challenges

When asked what they thought could be done to address the challenges listed, respondents were reluctant to provide answers. While some respondents (six) pointed out that although there were challenges, they acknowledged that there was no "blanket approach" to addressing these. Respondents stated that they were relying on the outcomes of this research for possible solutions.

### 4.6.15 Future of information provision for the union

The respondents were asked if they had any comments relating to the future of information provision in their union. The most respondents (12) had no comments to make. However, six respondents pointed out that their union must improve its commitment to making information available to members and people in general. By doing so, according to one respondent, "accessible information will increase our membership knowledge about the work done by the union**.**

### 4.6.16 Additional comments

In the final question respondents were asked if they had any additional comments on information seeking and dissemination. Of the six respondents who answered four mentioned that information can be "delivered" to members through general meetings. One of these respondents remarked that such meetings provide "an opportunity for every member to get the information he or she is looking for through asking questions and comments". In addition another respondent pointed out the general meetings are "mandatory for all members to attend and be informed about their union and leadership functions."

## 4.7 Summary

In this chapter the questionnaires and interviews results were presented. The chapter analysed, interpreted and presented the research findings. These findings were drawn from self-administered questionnaires that were distributed to the union leadership and face-to-face interviews with two union office bearers from each union partaking in the study. The questionnaires consisted of both open and closed questions, while the interviews, comprised only open questions. The questionnaire data was presented first and the interview data was presented later. The information needs of the union members, information seeking behaviour and the information dissemination methods that were identified were depicted using tables and in text form.

# Chapter 5: Discussion of findings

## 5.0 Introduction

The aim of the study was to get a better understanding of the crucial aspects of information seeking and information dissemination by union leadership and by so doing assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the mechanisms employed and challenges faced in doing so. This chapter discusses the findings of the study presented in Chapter 4 and in the light of the relevant literature as presented in Chapter 2. The discussion is structured around the main research questions as presented in Chapter 1. Findings were derived from the survey questionnaire given to, and interviews held with, the leadership of unions affiliated to COSATU. Wilson`s 1999 Model of Information Behaviour, outlined in Chapter 1, is used as a framework for the discussion of union leadership information seeking and dissemination. As noted in Chapter 3, the type of research design used for the study was a survey and the sampling technique used was a census. Also as noted in that Chapter, the response rate achieved could be considered very good.

## 5.1 Background information

This section discusses the findings relating to the demographic information of respondents.

### 5.1.1 Demographic profile of the respondents

The study focused on the leadership of unions affiliated to COSATU in the UMgungundlovu District. Data in Chapter 4 showed that 63.4% (45) respondents were Male and 36.6% (26) were Female. This resonates well with what was pointed to in the introductory chapter by Statistics South Africa in its *National and provincial labour market report* (2015) which covered the employment and unionization of both men and women in the labour movement. It is the researcher's considered view that the results also reflect the industries which the unions were representing in that  more males than females are employed (as pointed out by the above mentioned report), thus resulting in  the unionization of more males than females. The empirical data further showed that the highest percentage of respondents, 42% (30) were from the age group 26-35 years. The next highest number, 31% (22) were respondents between the ages 36-45. Finally, 23.9% (17) respondents were over 45 years of age. The majority of the respondents 88.7% (63) were of African race, nine

percent (7) Indians and one respondents was "Coloured".  To what extent the respondents reflect COSATU affiliated unions in general in terms of gender, age and race is not known. However, the researcher is of the opinion that leadership of other unions would have similar breakdowns in the three categories.

### 5.1.1.1 Use of a language and education

The data in the present study showed that the union leaders use both IsiZulu (54.9%) and English (45.1%) as their main language in dealing with union related information needs with the former being used more. A majority 62% (44) of respondents had a tertiary education compared to 38% (27) who had a secondary education only. It was established that of the 44 respondents who have a tertiary education, 63.6% (28) respondents used English as the main language in dealing with union related issues compared to 16 (36.4%) who used IsiZulu. Furthermore, of the 27 respondents who had attended secondary education the vast majority, 23 (85.2%) used IsiZulu as the main language in dealing with union related issues compared to the 14.8% who used English. There does appear to be a strong link between education and language used in dealing with union related issues.

Various reasons were put forward by the respondents for the use of either IsiZulu or English. The three most mentioned reasons for using IsiZulu by the 30 respondents were: to make information available to members, 15 (50%), the majority of members understand the language, 12 (40%) and to communicate better with fellow members, 10 (33.3%). Similar reasons were put forward for the use of English with the highest number of the 27 respondents using the language, namely 12 (44.4%) mentioning to make information available to members followed by nine (33.3%) respondents pointing to the need to accommodate everyone. The least mentioned reason for using either language was It is a home language mentioned by two respondents each from the IsiZulu and English "groups".

Grogan (2005) observed that union leaders are to provide members with information, advice and guide them about work related problems. In doing so language used plays a central role in the exchange of information. It must be borne in mind that the field of information sciences dealing with information and its dissemination points to the aspect of language used playing a crucial role in addressing information needs and in the exchange of information. In terms of the above results a small majority of respondents (54.9%) used

114

IsiZulu as the main language at work when dealing with union related issues and the main reason given for its use was to make information available to members – the same reason given by those respondents who used mainly English. It is interesting that English, which clearly would not be a home language of the majority of respondents or of union members, was used by a significant percentage (45.1%) of respondents. It does perhaps point to the dominance of the language in the work environment generally and the necessity of being competent in that language whether as part of union leadership or as a union member but being so would arguably be more important for the former. Whatever the language used it was apparent that the choice of language was predicated on the need to be as inclusive as possible.

**5.1.1.2 Union leadership affiliated to COSATU in UMgungundlovu District**

A large majority of respondents (77.5%) had been a member of the union for six or more years. There were two (2.8%) respondents who have been members of the union for more than twenty years. The union leaders in UMgungundlovu District occupy various positions in both branches and regional structures. The leadership positions of Branch Chairperson, Branch Secretary and Regional Chairperson had the highest representation - 11.3% each. The second highest representation came from the Shop-steward position with 9.9% of respondents. Lastly, the empirical data revealed that vast majority 88.7% (63) of respondents had not been members of any other union compared to 11.3% who had been. It is the researcher's view that the union related experience of the majority of respondents and the variety of leadership positions held provided them with much opportunity to understand their own work related information needs and seeking behaviour and, importantly, those of their respective union members. The leadership positions of Chairperson, Secretary and Shop-steward in particular are more likely to deal with union and work-related issues from members which require information for their resolution.

## 5.2 What are the information needs of the leadership of COSATU affiliated labour unions?

This was one of the main research questions which the study aimed to answer. The information needs that union leaders have as revealed in the findings in Chapter 4 are multifarious. These information needs namely, the dismissal cases (16.9%), workers benefits (15.4%), retrenchment (14%), workers' rights (14%), Union recruitment (11.2%), wage negotiations (8.4%), labour brokers (8.4%), union education (8.4%), and Workers` working conditions (2.8%) were established through the critical incident approach in which respondents were asked to describe a major situation or instance that required them to find information in their union environment. As pointed to in the literature review, these needs are classified mainly as institutional needs (Chaplan and Hertenstein 2002) since they are mainly dealing with union affairs. These needs, arguably, also point to the fundamental issues affecting workers that union leadership would have to deal with.

In the interviews, when asked about the relationship between union leadership and employers in relation to information provision, six respondents pointed out that unions do enquire and require information about their members from employers concerning issues such as death and retrenchment, benefits, dismissals and working conditions in general. It is evident and understandable that union leaders are very much concerned with the welfare of their members given that their information needs are mostly around the issues noted above.

Chaplan and Hertenstein (2002) pointed out the differences that exist in terms of the information needs of union officials were caused by the different roles that they had and their approach to information differed according to various criteria including their job classification, length of service in the union office and perceptions of themselves as administrators or activists. In the context of the present study, it is evident that the respondents had different leadership roles but to what extent these roles determined information needs or their approach to satisfying their needs was not explored. It could, however, be assumed that particular leadership roles (such as shop-steward, chairperson and secretary) have specific information needs associated with that role. So too could the leadership structure that they are part of, namely, branch or regional level have an influence

on their information needs. What is evident though is that a diversity of information needs were identified and that leadership roles were similarly diverse.

**5.3 How do they (the leadership) obtain the information related to their needs?**

Okoja-Odonga (2002) stated that information seeking behaviour involved how information was accessed and how the sources were used. In the current study, when asked how they went about resolving their information needs, the four most used sources by the respondents were employment legislation (21.1%), Department of Labour (19.7%), upper structure leaders (18.3%) and the Union secretary (14%). Other sources included employer (9.8%), the CCMA (9.8%) and union meetings (5.6%) the internet (1.4%) was one of the least used sources. It was stated by nine respondents in the interviews that the sources of information used by the union leaders in getting information for their needs must contribute to the betterment of the union and its members, regardless of the source. Essentially this means that as long as the information is helping the union, the concern about the source must be secondary. When asked about information provision amongst the union leadership, two respondents stressed that the union leadership used the information from their structures to unite leaders beyond their political differences that may arise over time. One respondent referred to the provision of information amongst the union leaders as a way to show maturity and trust to fellow leaders.

It is not surprising that the respondents used the above mentioned sources to address their information needs since their union responsibilities necessitated dealing with conditions of employment and the work related rights of their members. Of interest is that apart from employment legislation and the use of the internet, all other sources involved face-to-face contact and the oral transfer or communication of information. Also of interest is that the sources used by union leaders in UMgungundlovu are mainly formal compared to informal sources. This resonates with what was pointed out by Chaplan and Hertenstein (2005) who in their study referred to libraries of all types, research departments at international union headquarters, union publications, online databases, and the internet as formal sources compared to informal sources like the use of colleagues, telephone and office files.

In the interviews with respondents it was also established that the union leaders create relationships with various institutions like the Department of Labour, employers and the

CCMA and these relationships would presumably facilitate accessing information from these institutional sources. Question 15 in the questionnaire further investigated sources of information used by respondents when faced with a need or situation that required information in their union environment. In this question respondents were required to indicate from a list which sources they used the most. What could be considered as more formal sources predominated in the list and it was these types of sources which were most used, namely, union documents (23.9%), library (21.8%), TV and radio (21.8%) and newspaper (15.4%). The use of union documents as the most used source within the "union environment" could be due to their accessibility to the respondents. Colleagues, which was also an option provided, was mostly used by only four (5.6%) respondents. Even though this would have involved oral communication, colleagues were perhaps not considered "specialist" enough. While respondents were able to indicate an information source not listed none did. In the literature review it was noted that COSATU as a member of the Tripartite Alliance with other political and civic organizations shares important information through means of bilateral meetings. Interestingly, the union leaders in the study did not consider COSATU affiliates or alliance partners as sources of information to address their information needs.

What was observed in the literature and confirmed in the results is that information needs are dynamic and relying on a single information source may not address the whole variety of information needs faced by each union leader. In these findings it was also clear that there was no one specific information source which could be seen as the "best" source for resolving the information needs of the union leaders. One could argue that union leaders took a pragmatic approach in deciding what source to use and the choice of source would link in with the nature of the information need. It is interesting, however, to note that in the response to the open question on how the respondents went about resolving their information needs, sources which necessitated face-to-face or verbal contact were favoured. As such these findings resonate with those of Chaplan and Herstenstein (2002). Their findings, as noted in Chapter 2, pointed to union officials preferring informal and personal sources for information needed to carry out their roles. Such sources included the use of people known to union members and the use of telephonic enquiry.

It needs to be borne in mind that most information needs of union leaders are institutional needs and stem from the needs of union members themselves. It is thus the union members who will be the major determinant of the information needs experienced by the union leadership. However, the results to the questions which were centered on the NUMSA crisis revealed a subsequent change in terms of the use of information sources. Respondents were asked in question 32 about the sources they were using to get information related to the crisis. The results revealed that the most used sources were television 32.4% (23) respondents, newspapers 26.8% (19) COSATU CEC meetings 21.1% (15) and union upper structures 19.7% (14) respondents. It is interesting to note that respondents mostly used television and newspapers (media) compared to union upper structures and COSATU CEC meetings which they are directly linked with in the organization.

The findings relating to the NUMSA crisis correspond with what was found in the *Workers' Survey* (2012) that COSATU shares information through media briefings (these media briefings are mostly made available through television, internet and radio), hence the predominance of television above as a source. It can be assumed that respondents also have easier access to television as a source of information thus another possible reason for it being mostly used. In the interviews the aspect of media briefings was also covered. Although they were generally considered important, five (27.7%) respondents raised their dissatisfaction in relation to the lack of interaction with leadership when information is provided through media briefings.

Chaplan and Hertenstein (2005) in their study found that 71% of union leaders surveyed were using the internet as a source of information. This study was done over 10 years ago and this percentage is very likely to have increased. These findings differed markedly with the present study. As noted above, social media and internet as sources of information on the NUMSA crisis were little used by the study`s participants. Issues of access to the internet and having appropriate technology to do so do come to the fore here. This resonates well with what emerged in the interviews where the vast majority of respondents pointed to the unavailability of the infrastructure and equipment necessary to render information services. Thus the lack of such resources could conceivably be affecting the functioning of the unions as far as information services for both union leadership and members are concerned.

As observed by Mwale (2014) in his study, trade unions perform supplementary roles such as welfare, education and research activities which also form part of the responsibilities of union leaders. Brown (1972) further used the concept of union education as a source of information for unions. When defining union education the International Labour Organization (2007: 1) refers to functional education which is about the training of members about union operations and subject education like economics and international politics. In the present study some of the respondents during the interviews acknowledged the use of union education relating to information needs and information dissemination. However, the use of union education was not recognized as a significant source or mechanism by the union leaders in addressing their information needs or as a means to disseminate information.

### 5.3.1 Respondents success in getting the information for their needs

In Chapter 1, Ingwersen and Järvelin (2005: 386) explained information seeking as a form of human behaviour that encompasses pursuing of information by means of the active examination of information sources or information retrieval systems to satisfy the information need, or to solve a problem.

As was revealed in the empirical data more than 90% (64) of the respondents were successful in getting the information they were looking for in terms of the major situation or instance that required information. When asked how they were successful, 34.3% (22) of respondents said that they were able to solve the situation or need. This was followed by 16 (21.8%) respondents who said they got feedback to those they assisted. The remaining respondents either pointed to the quality of the information (it being relevant or reliable or trustworthy) or to the fact that the information enabled them to win the cases of their members. Success in all these instances was seen as satisfying or resolving a need.

As depicted in the Wilson (1999) Model it was revealed that the majority of the respondents were successful in their pursuit of information to address their information needs and that a reiteration of the information seeking process was thus not needed (as per Wilson`s model). In the section of the questionnaire which dealt with the NUMSA crisis, respondents pointed to the information sources used and also the reasons for using those sources. Certain qualities or criteria of the sources used were clearly evident. Accessibility of the sources

was an important consideration. Sources rated as accessible were TV, Newspapers, COSATU CEC meetings, Radio and, to a lesser extent, the internet and social media. Currency or up-to-dateness of the information provided by the source was also an understandable consideration and this was mentioned across all sources listed, namely, TV, Newspapers, the meetings above, upper structures of the union, radio, the internet and social media. Attributes of information noted above, namely trustworthiness, relevance and reliability were also mentioned but not, interestingly with regard to TV, radio or social media (see 4.5.2 in the previous chapter).

As noted above the vast majority of respondents were successful in getting the necessary information to address their needs. However, seven (9.8%) were not successful. The reasons given by the respondents again underscored the importance of accessibility (information not being accessible mentioned by three respondents) and relevance (also mentioned by three respondents) of the information in terms of need satisfaction. The remaining respondent referred to the unreliability of the information.

From these results it is safe to say that the number of respondents who were not successful is not significant compared to the number of respondents who were successful. However, the reasons provided above by the respondents who were not successful do need to be taken cognizance of by the union. As pointed out above, information needs are dynamic and require vast and often dispersed sources to address issues of accessibility, reliability and relevancy. It is also important for the leadership not to limit their search to the information that is only at their disposal. Equally important, should their information need not be satisfied, is for the leadership to "re-engage" themselves in a new search process which may well have to be extended to new information sources (as per Wilson's (1999) Model).

### 5.3.2   Preferred information format(s)

Smith (1991: 91) provides that challenges of information access by recipients may be examined with reference to the format in which the information is obtained and factors related to the settings in which information is used. In terms of the former, results revealed that union leaders used various information formats in meeting their work related information needs or institutional needs as described by Chaplan and Hertenstein (2002). When asked about the format they used to convey information in question 17, Print was the

most preferred format mentioned by 28 (39.4%) of respondents. This was followed by the verbal and electronic formats mentioned by 21 (29.5%) and 14 (19.7%) respondents respectively.

Question 18 asked respondents to state a reason for selecting a particular format (see Table 13). The main reasons given by respondents for print being their most preferred format to convey information were its reliability mentioned by 17 respondents, its accessibility mentioned by six respondents and five respondents pointed to print's trustworthiness. The main reason for the verbal format being preferred was its ability to address information needs on time mentioned by 11 respondents. Five respondents cited the convenience of the verbal format and three pointed to its reliability. Of the 14 respondents who selected the electronic format, eight pointed to its convenience, four to its usability and two respondents referred to its ability to easily make information available. Lastly, the audio-visual format was selected for its accessibility and convenience by six and two respondents respectively.

Having established above that union documents were listed by respondents as the most used information source for addressing needs in their work environment, it was interesting that no respondents mentioned that the print format easily made information available or that it was convenient for users. What was also interesting was that no respondents pointed to the usability of the print format which suggests that the format is turned to for reasons other than usability. In terms of the electronic format, respondents did not consider the format as reliable, accessible or trustworthy.

What does emerge from the results and from the discussion above is that there was a clear preference on the part of the respondents for both print and verbal formats of information and that the reliability of the information in both the formats was an important consideration for their preference.

Leach (1999) posed a significant factor namely the "best format" to be used in providing the information that is required by people in rural areas. It was established that there was a need for information to be presented in an acceptable format that was both usable and accessible to the people concerned. However, the results presented in Chapter 4 and the discussion above in relation to formats, indicate that there was no format which was significantly preferred by respondents - the "best format" referred to above. Print as noted,

was the preferred format for the largest number of respondents but this number was still less than half (39.4%) of the respondents. The verbal format was the next most preferred. One does, however, need to bear in mind that the electronic format option provided referred to information in digital format which also, like print, had to be read (albeit from a screen). Thus when added to the print format it is evident that for a small majority (59%) of union leaders that this was the preferred format.

In question 34, respondents were asked to indicate the format in which they were getting information in relation to the NUMSA crisis was mostly in. Contrary to the above results, Audio-visual was mentioned by 50% (24) of respondents as the most used format compared to print listed by 39.6% (19) of respondents and Audio by 14 (29.2%) respondents. If audio is combined with audio-visual, then over half (79.2%) of respondents used that format. The verbal format came in at a surprisingly low fourth place mentioned by nine (18.8%) respondents. When asked to explain their answers it is evident that the use of audio-visual (television) was due to its accessibility to the union leaders with 11 respondents mentioning this. One could also assume that it, together with radio (audio), were formats in which the more up-to-date information would be found.

## 5.4 What is the information they (the leadership) disseminate to unions` members?

Question 26 asked respondents what type of information they provide to union members. A list of possible information types was given from which respondents had to choose (an Other option was also provided but no respondent made use of this). Perhaps, understandably, as reflected in Table 27, the information type eliciting the highest number of responses, 28 (39.4%) was wage increment. This was followed by congress resolutions (28.1%) and Job advertisement and union campaigns - 22.5% each. The two information types with the least number of responses were changes in labour legislation and policies (5.6%) and union monthly fees (2.8%). In the interviews, when asked about the role of information to union members, eight respondents stated that the union leaders do take care of  information that seeks to help union members and which also assists them (the union leadership) in achieving their goals and the goals of the union as a whole. Three of these respondents pointed to information relating to financial and medical benefits of union members but that most of the time it related to information on employment linked matters.

It was emphasized by five respondents that the role of information was to benefit the union members, to address their concerns.

It needs to be borne in mind that one of the union responsibilities is to change the social condition of their members. Higher wages would pay a significant role in doing so and it is thus not surprising that information on wage increment was the most mentioned by respondents. Also not surprising given the unemployment situation was that information on Job advertisement was the third most mentioned type. Morris (2002) pointed to the need for unions to provide orientating information to members to enhance the membership's understanding of unions. In the present study information like congress resolutions, union campaigns, union constitution, union meetings and agendas, collective bargaining resolutions and the like (see Table 27) could also be considered as orienting information providing members with a better understanding of what the role of the union is.

The *Workers' Survey* (2012) shares some resemblance with the present study in that the information disseminated to members, as determined by the survey, corresponds to some extent with what the present study found. This included information on topics such as negotiations between union leaders and employers, labour laws, employment equity, skills development, health and safety, political economy, gender, role of shop-stewards, workplace issues and HIV-AIDS. While some of these topics speak to the social role of union leaders, they also align with Morris' "orientating" information noted above.

**5.5 How do they (the leadership) disseminate that information to union members?**

In question 23, an open question, respondents were asked about the information provision method or mechanism they mainly used to provide information to union members. The most "mainly used" method was general meetings with 38% (27) of respondents who mentioned this. The union secretary was selected by 22.5% (16) of respondents and Face-to-face with 18.3% (13) of respondents. Social media and fax were the least selected methods with nine (12.6%) and six (8.4%) respondents respectively.

Question 24 asked respondents to explain why they used that particular method – what the advantages were. The issue of reliability was a common explanation given by respondents. General meetings were pointed to as a reliable method by 35.7% (15) of respondents. Other

reasons pointed out by the respondents were that the method allowed interaction between leaders and union members and its ability to provide immediate answers with 19% (8) and 11.9% (5) of respondents respectively. In terms of the Union secretary, reliability was mentioned by 26.1% (11) of respondents. Also mentioned were the aspects of accessibility of the method - five (11.9%) respondents and it being user friendly - one (2.3%) respondent. Face-to-face, in addition to its reliability – eight (19%) respondents, was mainly used as a method for its ability to allow interaction of union leaders and members – seven (16.6%) respondents and its ability to provide immediate answers - two (4.7%) respondents.

The main reason for selecting social media was that the method was quick to provide information – mentioned by 7.1% (3) of respondents. A second reason for the use of social media was its ability to allow interaction between leaders and union members and for providing immediate answers – each mentioned by two (4.7%) respondents.

It was evident that union leaders used methods that they consider reliable, interactive, and accessible in addressing the information needs of their members. With the exception of social media and fax, these methods are more oral in nature. Leach (1999) and Dansoh (2007) pointed out the significance of oral methods in the provision of information. Their findings resonate with the present study given that general meetings, the union secretary and face-to-face were the three main methods used by the respondents and when combined were used by a substantial majority (79%) of respondents.

The significance of oral methods was also revealed in question 35, an open question which asked the respondents about how they, in the main, were providing the information related to the NUMSA crisis to their members and why they were using that format. What emerged was the dominance of the verbal format in the form of meetings (branch, mass, shop-steward and regional) as a vehicle to provide the information. Sixty five percent of respondents mentioned such a format and if the use of the Telephone is added (also a verbal format) the percentage rises to over 70% The use of emails and social media accounted for 14% and 12.6% of respondents respectively. Print was thus not a significant format at all represented only by the use of email (which would have been print based).

While reasons for using a particular format in providing information related to the NUMSA crisis varied, a common reason was that of reliability. The issue of reliability underscores the importance union leaders attach to their being accountable to union members and also underscores the importance of the need for credibility and trustworthiness of the information that is provided. Finally, other reasons given relating to the use of meetings other than reliability were currency (information being updated) and interaction.

In question 25, respondents were asked to provide the disadvantages of the information provision method provided in question 24. Both general meetings and face-to-face were considered time consuming by 70.9% (22) and 22.5% (7) of respondents respectively. lack of attendance and meeting disturbance were also mentioned as disadvantages in terms of general meetings while face-to-face was also considered exhausting. Lack of internet access, cost of data and lack of trust were the disadvantages levelled against social media. Lack of adaptation to new technology was a disadvantage for the use of fax. It is understandable that the use of meetings and face-to-face require much time due to the fact that there can be lots of questions, follow-ups and clarification that may happen during the engagements. However, with these methods, much information could be exchanged or provided by people involved, thus addressing the information needs that may arise.

What was observed by the respondents in terms of the lack of trust in relation to social media and lack of adaptation to new technology must be given the attention it deserves by the union leaders. During the interviews respondents were asked about the state of infrastructure and equipment that help the union to provide information services. As pointed out by the one of the respondents, unions are "big bodies of people" but remain poor organs without the necessary resources to render information services that can equip their members. It is therefore, important for unions to adapt to new trends of information provision methods and have the necessary resources to do so.

Question 21 also explored the methods or mechanisms of information provision to union members used by union leadership. Unlike question 23 it was a closed question providing respondents with a list of methods from which they could choose what they considered the most useful. Methods considered the most useful were face-to-face - 39.4% (28) of respondents, Union secretary reports - 29.5% (21) of respondents and television 26.7%

(19) of respondents, newspapers 23.9% (17) and books 18.3% (13) of respondents closely followed. radio, emails, Social media and magazines were the least chosen methods. As discussed above, general meetings emerged as the method mainly used by respondents to provide information when they were asked an open question (question 23). While general meetings was not listed as a choice in question 21 it is surprising that it was not mentioned under the option of Other which was provided. Terminology used in the questions, namely "most useful" as opposed to "mainly use" might account for this. However, face-to-face was a common response in both questions.

When asked to explain why they considered a method more useful, reliability was the most mentioned reason - mentioned by 29 (45.3%) of respondents. This was followed by being able to provide updated and relevant information - 19 (29.6%) respondents. It is evident that reasons provided by respondents for using a particular method to provide information largely echo the reasons they provided for using a particular method to receive information to satisfy their own information needs.

The final question dealing with the how of information dissemination by union leaders was question 27. Here, the respondents were asked to indicate the format in which information was mainly made available to other union members and followed a question establishing the type of information provided (see above). A list of formats was provided from which respondents could only choose one. The results indicate that the formats most used to make information available were print and verbal with 33 (46.6%) and 28 (39.4%) respondents indicating those formats respectively. Electronic format was selected by six (8.4%) and audio-visual four (5.6%) respondents coming in some way behind that of print in particular. One again, these results do, to a large extent, echo the formats preferred by respondents in satisfying their own information needs as discussed above. With regard to electronic and audio-visual formats the point does need to be made that such formats containing union-related information are arguably far outnumbered by their print counterparts. It is also important to consider the aspect of availability of the format used.

### 5.5.1 Social media

Given the proliferation in the use of social media in society generally, its role in the provision of information to union members was explored in some detail in the questionnaire. As noted above it was only used to a limited extent in relation to the NUMSA issue. The 45 respondents who commented on the role it could play in information provision pointed to its ability to provide updated information (16 respondents) to make information available (11 respondents), to provide information quickly and efficiently (9 respondents) and the ability to easily provide information to a widespread population (6 respondents). This positive view of the role of social media was supported by the fact that 72% of respondents indicated that they had indeed used social media as a means to provide information to members. However, it is evident from the results and discussion above that social media was never seen as the main or most used method of information provision and its use was quite limited.

Given the increase in the ownership of cell phones with internet access (as was pointed out by respondents) it is clear that social networks could well become an important mechanism for information provision. This is re-enforced by the finding that 96% of respondents who had used a social media application to provide information to members stated that its use was successful. However, when asked whether they would like to see the union using social media more as a means of providing information only a small majority (57.7%) of respondents answered in the affirmative. Those respondents who gave a reason for their answer pointed to such media further contributing to the ability of the union to provide information (nine  respondents) and that they were an important method of communicating information (six respondents). Interestingly, six respondents said that such media are taking over print and that unions need to adapt and four respondents referred to the fact that union members are becoming younger and there was thus a need to relate to what could assist them in getting information easily.  However, what must be borne in mind is that use of social media requires access to the internet which in turn requires the necessary devices with the necessary data – both usually requiring financial outlays which was of concern to respondents (see below).

Finally 12 (66.6%) of the respondents who were interviewed, when asked about the importance of social media, pointed to the fact that unions were yet to make inroads toward the use of social media like Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp to their fullest potential. This was due to the mistrust of the information rendered through such mediums.

## 5.6 What are the problems they (union leadership) experience when obtaining and disseminating the information?

Respondents were asked in question 19 to indicate the challenges they faced when looking or searching for information relating to their trade union work. The challenges mentioned by the respondents varied and there was no single challenge mentioned by more than a third of respondents. The five most mentioned challenges (mentioned by 10 or more respondents) were Lack of information accessibility (21 or 29.6%), Information disorganization (19 or 26.8%), Information not being up-to-date (14 or 19.7%), the Lack of internet access 11 (15.5%) and, finally, there being No one to assist with information (10 or 14.1%).

The aspect of Information disorganization (arguably as a result of the lack of information management) appears to be a serious concern to union leaders. It is in the researcher's opinion that the disorganization of information could be caused by the lack of proper (formal) organization and arrangement of information which enable access to the information by union leaders. It was further observed that issues relating to the cost of internet subscriptions prevented union leaders from accessing the huge variety of information available online. The lack of internet access means that union information retrieval and provision are also negatively affected. It is generally acknowledged that the internet plays a crucial role in this information age where almost everyone requires access to the information it holds including, importantly, labour unions.

The issue of the internet was further stressed during the interviews. A majority of 12 (66.6%) respondents referred to the challenge of unavailability of infrastructure and equipment in the provision of information services. The expense of internet access was also pointed to. These limitations were summed up by a comment of one of the respondents when he/she remarked that "unions are big bodies of people but remain poor organs without necessary resources to render information services that can equip their members."

Question 20 asked the respondents to provide the ways to address the above challenges. The need for unions to acquire updated information was mentioned by 38.6% (22) of respondents while 29.8% (17) referred to the use of more union meetings. Other ways to address the challenges included the need for an open policy on information provision 15.5% (11) and an affordable internet subscription mentioned by eight (11.3%) respondents.

In question 30 respondents were asked what challenges they faced in providing information to union members. Four of the six challenges mentioned had to do with meetings. Amongst other things meetings were considered time consuming (36.6% of respondents), members did not attend meetings (29.6%) and the lack of participation in meetings (25.4%). The only other challenge mentioned by more than 20% of respondents was union divisions. While meetings elicited the most challenges this is also evidence of meetings being seen as an important method or mechanism to provide information by respondents. However, when asked what could be done to address the challenges 12 respondents suggested that union leadership should not wait for general meetings to provide information to members. Two other sets of responses support this move away from meetings: Nine respondents referred to the need to explore the use of other forms of communication such as social media to provide information to union members and, in similar vein, four respondents expressed the need for members to buy cellphones with email and social media capabilities to "easily cascade information to them."

The same question concerning challenges faced in the provision of information was asked in the interviews. Meetings did not emerge as a common response as above but rather challenges relating to the crucial issues of language (members not being able to understand a certain language and thus the information or message given) – 10 respondents, and literacy levels (where skills were such that print could not be understood or that reading was a challenge) – eight respondents. Other challenges concerned the failure of members to attend union programmes (including meetings) which resulted in members missing out on the information provided in such contexts – eight respondents, internet access being considered expensive – four respondents and linked to this limited resources – two respondents.

In responding to the interview question of how the challenges in getting information across mentioned above could be addressed, six respondents, while acknowledging the challenges, pointed to the fact that there was no blanket approach in addressing these (and that the respondents were relying on the outcomes of the present study for possible solutions). However, current initiatives to address members' needs included mid-term conferences, the adoption of social media, compulsory union education and the use of newsletters. It is evident that there is no one solution to the challenges faced and no one "silver bullet" in terms of mechanisms or methods of information provision. Both verbal and print-based interventions were mentioned by interviewees and the potential of social media and technology in general, as has been discussed above, was getting increasing recognition.

## 5.7 Additional comments on information seeking and information dissemination

When asked if they had any additional comments to make concerning information seeking and dissemination a minority of respondents in the questionnaire survey underscored the importance of access to information empowering members (six respondents), that leadership had the responsibility to address the information needs of union members (four respondents) and that members must be able to use other forms of information sources such as television, radio and books for more "knowledge" (also four respondents). Two respondents, linking in with the empowering role of information, mentioned that members must gain confidence by getting information from leadership but also made the proviso that the information needed to be valid and reliable. The six interviewees who responded to the same question in the interview all underscored the importance of general meetings in terms of information "delivery". One respondent perhaps encapsulating the reason for their importance, stated that meetings provide "an opportunity for every member to get the information he or she is looking for through asking questions and comments."

## 5.8 Summary

This chapter comprised a discussion of the findings of the questionnaire survey and interviews conducted on the information seeking and information dissemination by the leadership of unions affiliated to COSATU in the UMgungundlovu District. The discussion of the findings was, as far as possible, done with reference to the relevant literature as presented in Chapter 2 and in the light of the theoretical framework - Wilson`s (1999)

Model of Information Behaviour – as outlined in Chapter 1. The research questions as listed in the introductory chapter provided the framework for the discussion.

The final chapter, Chapter 6, which will provide the summary, conclusions and recommendations, follows.

## Chapter 6: Conclusions and recommendations

### 6.0 Introduction

The purpose of the study was to identify and get a better understanding of the crucial aspects of information seeking and information dissemination by the leadership of unions affiliated to the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and by so doing assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the mechanisms employed and challenges faced by the leadership in doing so. In this concluding chapter a summary of the study will be given, main findings and conclusions reached will be provided and recommendations will be made. Suggestions for further research will also be provided.

### 6.1 Revisiting the research questions

The research questions which underpinned the study were:

a) What are the information needs of the leadership of COSATU affiliated labour unions?
b) How do they (the leadership) obtain the information related to their needs?
c) What is the information they disseminate to union members?
d) How do they disseminate that information to union members?
e) What are the problems they experience in obtaining and disseminating the information?

A brief overview of the study follows.

### 6.2 Summary of the study

Chapter 1, the introductory chapter, provided a background to the study and an outline of the research aim. The significance of the study, the broader contextual problems and the limitations and delimitation of the study were presented. Definitions of key terms used in the study were provided. A further issue discussed was the theoretical framework based on Wilson`s 1999 Model of Information Behaviour. As was noted, this model has been successfully used by other researchers namely Seyama (2009) and Majyambere (2012).

Chapter 2 reviewed the relevant literature in relation to the information seeking and information dissemination by trade union leadership. The lack of literature on the topic was pointed to and, as a consequence, literature of a more general nature in relation to adult information seeking and dissemination was included. The research questions listed above provided a loose framework for the discussion. Other issues covered included union education and training and, importantly, the role of ICT and the internet in information seeking and dissemination.

Chapter 3 began by outlining the different research paradigms that exist in social research. This was followed by a discussion of qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods research in relation to the study. Descriptions of the research design, population of the study and data collection and data analysis methods were given. A mixed methods approach, namely the use of both a self-administered questionnaire and an interview, was adopted. The distribution of the questionnaires was described as was the conducting of the interviews. The importance of pre-testing the instruments was pointed to in the light of validity of the research. The chapter ended with an outline of the ethical considerations relating to the study.

Chapter 4 presented the research findings. These findings were drawn from self-administered questionnaires that were distributed to the union leadership and face-to-face interviews with two union office bearers from each union partaking in the study. The questionnaire data was presented first and this was followed by the findings emerging from the interviews. Findings from the questionnaires were presented using tables and charts while the qualitative findings stemming from the interview were presented in text form.

Chapter 5 discussed the findings of the questionnaire survey on, and the interviews with, the leadership of unions affiliated to COSATU in the UMgungundlovu District. As in Chapter 2 the research questions underpinning the study provided the framework for the discussion. The discussion highlighted significant findings and wherever possible and appropriate the relevant literature was brought into the discussion.

Chapter 6, the current chapter will, as mentioned above, present the main findings, conclusions reached and the recommendations stemming from these. The chapter, also as mentioned, will end with suggestions for further research. As occurred in previous

chapters, the research questions posed will provide the relevant headings. To begin with however, conclusions relating to the demographic profiles of the respondents and the issue of language will be given.

## 6.3 The demographic profile of the labour union leaders in the UMgungundlovu District

The majority of the labour union leaders who participated in the study were Males 63.4% (45) compared to their counter-part Female with 36.6% (26). It is not surprising that the issue of gender balance in leadership is still yet to be addressed in the context of union leadership participation as many of the leaders in the present study were found to be male dominant. A majority of the respondents were from the age group between 26-35 years, which in current South African terms, could be considered "young". The majority of the respondents (62%) had a tertiary education and a small majority (54.9%) used the IsiZulu language in dealing with work related matters. In terms of race, the vast majority, 88.7% of the respondents, were Africans.

By the data presented it can be concluded that in terms of this research that males still enjoy preference in terms of employment or employability and leadership positions when compared to their female counterparts.

The second conclusion in relation to demographics of the respondents is that they held a variety of leadership positions in their respective trade unions. The most common ones were Branch chairperson, Branch secretary, Regional chairperson and Shop-steward. All four positions are arguably ones which necessitated the frequent seeking and dissemination of information regarding union related issues.

### 6.3.0 Use of a particular language in dealing with union related issues

Union leaders used both IsiZulu and English when dealing with union related issues with IsiZulu being used, as mentioned above, by a small majority of the leaders (54.9%) while English was used by 45.1% of the leaders. Three main reasons were put forward by the respondents for the use of either IsiZulu or English. These were making information available to members, the membership understanding the language used and to be able to accommodate everyone (members).

It can be concluded that the leadership used IsiZulu more than English as the main language. This is perhaps understandable given that not only the union membership but the leaders themselves would more than likely be from KwaZulu-Natal where IsiZulu is widely spoken and understood. Similarly, English is also a widely spoken and understood language particularly in the more urban environments and in the work setting.   It also evident that there is a link between educational level of leadership and the language used by them when dealing with union related issues in that union leaders with tertiary education tended to use English more. However, it can be concluded that with the use of both of these languages union leaders and membership can address their needs and exchange information. It was also clear that for the union leaders to address their needs and those of their members there was need for them to be competent in both IsiZulu and English.

### 6.3.1    What are the information needs of the union leaders?

This was one of the key questions. The information needs of union leaders were explained in the context of the critical incident technique used to identify information seeking situations. While all the situations mentioned could be regarded as critical, the four most mentioned ones were dismissal cases, workers benefits, retrenchment and workers' rights.

Given the above it can be concluded that the information needs of the union leaders were diverse. It can also be concluded that information needs of union leaders are very complex as they not only involve their own generated needs but their needs are also as a result of the needs of other union members.

### 6.3.2    How do they (the leadership) obtain the information for their needs?

This was a second key question. This question aimed to identify the sources of information that were accessed and used by the leaders of unions when seeking information for their needs. The four most used sources of information by union leadership were employment legislation, the Department of Labour, upper structure leaders and the union secretary. Also mentioned were the employer and the CCMA.  Other sources used by union leadership when requiring information in the union environment (and not linked to the critical incident mentioned above) were, in the main, union documents, the library, TV and radio, and the newspaper.

It can be concluded that in responding to their needs, union leaders create relationships with various institutions like the Department of Labour, their employers and the CCMA and these relationships would facilitate information access. A further conclusion is that the sources used by the union leaders in addressing their needs were mainly formal sources which were characterized by their reliability and accessibility. For example, the use of union documents as the most used source within the "union environment" was due to their accessibility to the union leaders. A third conclusion is that a variety of information sources were used (possibly reflecting the variety of information needs faced) and the final conclusion is that no one source was viewed as the "best" source by the leadership - the source used depended on the particular information need. The approach of union leadership to information sources could be considered a pragmatic one in that if a source was able to provide the requisite information for the betterment of their members it was used. This was most evident in their response to the NUMSA crisis where the most used sources were television, newspapers, COSATU meetings and upper structures of the union. All these sources would have provided the current information most needed during the crisis.

### 6.3.2.1 Are the leaders successful in getting the information of their needs?

Having established union leaders' information needs and the sources used to obtain the information, it was found that the vast majority of union leaders 90% (64) were successful in getting the information to address their needs. When asked the reason for their success just over a third (34.3%) of respondents mentioned being Able to solve the situation or need and a quarter mentioned getting positive feedback from those assisted. What is interesting is that 42.3% of respondents referred to the nature of the information pointing out that it was either relevant, reliable or trustworthy. In terms of the reasons given for using sources to access information related to the NUMSA crisis, currency of the information obtained was, understandably, an important consideration for the source used as was accessibility of the source. Also referred to, as with the critical incident need above, were the important issues of relevancy, reliability and trustworthiness of the information obtained.

Given the above, it can be concluded that successful satisfaction of an information need is contingent on a number of factors concerning the information source, not least of which have to do with the nature of the information that the sources provide – relevance,

reliability and trustworthiness being important considerations. It can also be concluded that there was no need for the vast majority of union leaders to reiterate their information search (as per Wilson`s (1999) Model) as their information needs were satisfied.

### 6.3.2.2 Preferred information format by union leaders

In the second sub-section dealing with the information needs of union leadership respondents were asked which information format they considered the most preferable in terms of satisfying their information needs. No particular format was preferred by more than 50% of respondents and print and verbal formats emerged as the most preferred with 39.4% and 29.5% or respondents respectively.

It can be concluded that Print remains an important format for union leadership in terms of them satisfying their own information needs - it being considered reliable, accessible and trustworthy. A second conclusion is that the verbal format is also an important one and seen as being able to address information needs on time and convenient. A third conclusion is that the electronic and audio-visual formats were the least preferred formats generally but that the preference for and use of different formats changed in different circumstances or situations. Thus during the NUMSA crisis the format most used by the respondents to get information was Audio-visual (or more specifically television) with 33.8% of respondents doing so. In doing so accessibility was an important consideration and one could assume that currency of information played a role as well.

### 6.3.3   What is the information they (leadership) disseminate to unions members?

This was the third research question. The information most provided by respondents was, perhaps understandably, on wage increments mentioned by just under 40% of respondents. Information on congress resolutions, job advertisements and union campaigns were also mentioned by more than 22% of respondents.

As noted in the previous chapter one of the responsibilities of unions is to change the social and economic conditions of their members and higher wages would play a significant role in doing so. It is thus not surprising that one can conclude that information on wages will continue to be an important consideration in disseminating information to members as will

information dealing with employment possibilities – the third most mentioned information type.

### 6.3.4    How do they disseminate that information to union members?

The fourth research question underpinning the study investigated how union leadership went about disseminating information to members. The most mainly used method or mechanism in doing so was general meetings with 38% of respondents doing so, followed by the union secretary (22.5%) and face-to-face (18.3%).  In terms of the NUMSA crisis various forms of meetings were used by 63% of respondents to provide information relating to the crisis to members.

Given the above it can be concluded that the verbal or oral methods or mechanisms are important ones in terms of information dissemination by union leaders to members. Verbal methods do allow for accessibility of the information and, to a large extent, also allow for interaction and this could arguably enable the reliability and trustworthiness of the information to be established – these considerations once again emerging as important ones in the choice of method.  Thus the conclusion drawn here is that union leaders prefer using types of methods for their ability to make information easily available to members and that members are able to access information easily using these methods.

The use of social media was considered important in the provision of information. When asked what role social media could play in providing information to members the 42 (59.2%) who replied all saw a role for the use of social media and their reasons for doing so included the ability to provide updated information to members and to do so quickly and efficiently. In addition, 72% of respondents indicated that they had indeed used one of the social media applications as a means to provide information to members. Importantly, the vast majority of respondents who had used such media (96%) stated that they were successful in doing so. However, these positive responses need to be tempered by the fact that when asked whether they would like to see the union using social media more as a means of providing information only a small majority (57.7%) of respondents answered in the affirmative. It also needs to be pointed out that social media did not feature to any extent in responses to the earlier questions.

Given the proliferation of smart phone technology and the decreasing costs of such entry level phones it can be concluded that social media applications can play an important role in information dissemination in the union environment; the precedents in this regard have been set and there is the potential for much greater use of such media. The stumbling block (as will be highlighted below) is the high cost of internet access in South Africa and that without such access use of social media as a disseminator or provider of information will remain limited in the union environment.

### 6.3.5   What are the problems they experience in obtaining and disseminating the information?

This was final research question underpinning the study and has been divided into two parts as reflected below.

### 6.3.5.1 What challenges do union leaders face when looking for information relating to their trade union work?

The three main challenges faced by respondents when looking for information were the lack of information accessibility (29.6%), information disorganization (26.8%), and information not being updated (19.7%). A fourth challenge was the lack of internet access (15.5%) which could be seen as an accessibility issue.

It could be concluded that the first three challenges relate to information management and that it is highly likely that there is a lack of formal information management practices in place in the unions under study. Such practices would address the issues of information not being updated, its disorganization and its accessibility. An obvious conclusion relating to the lack of internet access is the need for appropriate technology and the affordability of internet subscriptions.

### 6.3.5.2 What challenges do union leaders face when providing information to union members?

Challenges faced when providing information differed markedly from those faced when looking for information. The main finding to emerge in this regard was that four of the six challenges mentioned by respondents had to do with meetings. Meetings were considered

time consuming (36.6% of respondents), Members did not attend meetings (29.6%) and the lack of participation in meetings (25.4%). The only other challenge mentioned by more than 20% of respondents was divisions in unions – given the NUMSA crisis (and later developments) this finding is not surprising.

It can be concluded that the focus on meetings does underscore their importance in information dissemination and that 23 (32%) of respondents wanted more meetings when asked for could be done to address the challenges listed. It must however be pointed out that suggestions to address the challenges listed also included a move away from meetings to disseminate information. In this regard 12 respondents were of the opinion that union leadership should not wait for general meetings to provide information to members while 13 respondents either suggested or inferred the need to use other forms of communication such as social media.

The final conclusion is that there is no one solution to address the challenges faced nor is there one "silver bullet" to address the searching for information on the one hand and the dissemination of information on the other. Verbal and Print based mechanisms in terms of the latter remain important and there is increasing awareness of the role of social media applications in this regard.

## 6.4 Recommendations

In the light of the main findings and the conclusions outlined above, the following recommendations are made to assist in improving the information seeking behaviour of union leadership and their dissemination of information to members of unions affiliated to COSATU in the UMgungundlovu District.

- The first recommendation concerns the issue of language. IsiZulu and English were clearly the main languages used by all union leaders taking part in the study and the ability to communicate in both languages would be an obvious advantage in information dissemination in the union environment. It is recommended that all union leadership pay particular attention to being literate in both languages and if this is not the case then structures be put in place to assist with this. Irrespective of whether one is English or IsiZulu speaking, it must be ensured that union leaders are

able to communicate in both IsiZulu and English to ensure that information is made available to union members.

- Secondly, while the information needs of union leaders could be seen as diverse there were four areas in particular that information was required – these were dismissal cases, workers' benefits, retrenchment and workers' rights.   It is recommended that unions make special efforts to identify, collect and, if necessary, organize information on these and related issues. Importantly, union leaders would need to be made aware of the various sources containing such information and how they could be accessed. It was also noted that the information needs of the union leaders were complex as they not only involved their own generated needs but their needs were also the result of the needs of other union members. This underscores the importance of the above recommendation but also suggests that union leaders, apart from having access to relevant information, are provided with the necessary time and support to adequately address their own information needs and those of their members and are able to do so in an efficient and effective manner.

- While the vast majority of union leaders were successful in satisfying or meeting their information needs what emerged quite strongly in the findings was the importance they attached to the reliability and trustworthiness of the information obtained and used. In this current era of "fake information" it is recommended that the issue of reliability of information is given attention in union structures and that leadership (and union members) are continually reminded of this important issue.

- In terms of the information disseminated by union leadership to members important areas were that of wage increments, congress resolutions and Job advertisements. Similar to a recommendation above, efforts need to be made to identify, collect and if necessary organize information on these and related issues.

- What emerged from the study is the limited use made of the internet as a source of information by the respondents. While the problems relating to internet access are acknowledged it is recommended that attention be given to the internet as an

information source particularly in the light of relevant information such as case law increasingly being made available online.

- The how of information dissemination was a crucial aspect of the study. Both print and verbal or oral methods or mechanisms were used in this regard. Meetings (as a verbal method) in particular, played an important role in getting information across to members. However, what emerged, and linked with the internet noted above, was social media applications not being used to their full potential by the union leadership participating in the study. Clearly such applications could be used to disseminate information to leadership and members alike in a quick and efficient manner. Given that, and while acknowledging the problems relating to internet access (as noted above and highlighted in the study), it is recommended that increasing attention be given to the use of social media as a means to disseminate and exchange information by the various unions. In recommending this it is stressed that issues of sensitivity and confidentiality of the information disseminated and exchanged must be taken cognizance of and if necessary union leaders could organize union programmes in which social media experts can provide the necessary training that will respond to various issues of concern that has limited social media usage in many labour unions.

- In the light of the challenges face by union leadership in searching for and disseminating information there are two recommendations: The first stems from the challenges faced by leadership when looking for information and three challenges came to the fore, namely the lack of information accessibility, information disorganization and information not being updated. As suggested in the interviews it is recommended that thought be given by union leadership to having an information officer who would be responsible for identifying, collection and organizing information relevant to the union members and the work environment as a whole. His or her duties could include information dissemination activities as well.

The second recommendation stems from various forms of meetings being identified as the biggest challenge in terms of information dissemination. It is evident that meetings do play an important role in information dissemination and exchange and

it is recommended that leadership, and to a lesser extent union members, receive training on how best to utilize meetings for the purposes of information dissemination and exchange.

- The final recommendation stems from the complexity of information needs, information sources and information dissemination. All are constantly in a state of flux and, for example, one method or mechanism of information dissemination which might work in one situation need not necessarily work in another. This means that the information services or tools of information access and information dissemination must be flexible and be able to adapt to meet the information needs which are, themselves, always in a state of flux. This suggests that union leadership need to keep abreast of developments and it is recommended that workshops be held with union leadership from the various unions in which these issues can be raised and discussed. The findings of this study could serve as a starting point for such discussions.

## 6.5 Suggestions for further research

The following studies are suggested:

- It is suggested that a similar study be replicated in other districts or in other provinces with union leaders to determine whether similar results will be forthcoming and how the union leaders of that district are dealing with information needs and information dissemination related issues.

- Further studies may adopt different research approaches which may include observing the actual behaviour of union leaders in both accessing and disseminating information utilizing a variety of sources and mechanisms.

- Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the perspectives of the union members (as opposed to union leadership) vis a vis information needs, information seeking and information dissemination need to be determined. Findings here will provide a useful and important counterpoint to those of the present study.

## 6.6 Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the entire study. Main findings and conclusions with respect to the findings were presented. Recommendations were made and suggestions for further studies were provided.

# References

Afasr, A. 2014. Validity in research [Slides].
http://lib.vcomsats.edu.pk/library/ENG505/Course%20Content/ENG505%20PPT/Lecture_13/13%20%20Validity%20in%20research.ppt  (Accessed 17 June 2014).

Ananaba, W. 1979. *The trade union movement in Africa: promise and performance*. London: C. Hurst.

Anwar, M. A., Al-Ansari, H., and Abdullah, A. 2004. Information seeking behaviour of Kuwaiti journalists. *Libri* 54 (4): 228-236.

Babbie, E. and Mouton, J. 2001. *The practice of social research.* 8th ed. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

Babbie, E. and Mouton, J. 2011. *The practice of social research*. 11th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Belkin, N. J. 1980. Anomalous states of knowledge as a basis for information retrieval. *The Canadian Journal of Information Science* 5: 133-43.

Bell, J. 1999. *Doing your research project*. 3rd ed. Maidenhead, Philadelphia: Open University Press.

Bernard, H.R. 2000. *Social research methods: qualitative and quantitative approaches*. London: Sage Publications.

Bhattacherjee, A. 2012. *Social science research: principles, methods and practices.* 2nd ed. http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1002&context=oa_textbooks (Accessed 12 August 2014).

Bird, D.K. 2009. The use of questionnaires for acquiring information on public perception of natural hazards and risk mitigation-a review of current knowledge and practice. http://www.nat-hazards-earth-syst-sci.net/9/1307/2009/nhess-9-1307-2009.pdf (Accessed 22 July 2016).

Brown, J.M. 1972. Adults education among members of the North Vancouver Labour Union. Masters dissertation. University of British Colombia. https://circle.ubc.ca/bitstream/handle/2429/33488/UBC_1972_A8%20B77.pdf?sequence=1 (Accessed 14 April 2014).

Bryman, A. E. and Burgess, R. G. (Eds.) 1999. *Qualitative research* (4 volumes). London: Sage Publications.

Bryson, A .2003. Working with dinosaurs? union effectiveness in delivering for employees: London Policy Studies Institute http://www.psi.org.uk/pdf/rdp/rdp11-working-with-dinosaurs.pdf  (Accessed 10 July 2016).

Case, D.O. 2007. *Looking for information: a survey of research on information seeking, needs, and behaviour.* 2rd ed. Bingley, UK: Emerald Group.

Case, D.O. 2011. *Looking for information: a survey of research on information seeking, needs, and behaviour.* 3nd ed. Bingley, UK: Emerald Group.

Cargan, L. 2007. *Doing social research*. Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield.

Chaplan, M.A. and Hertenstein, E.J. 2002. The information needs of local union officials. *Library Trends* 51: 50-69. https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/bitstream/handle/2142/8446/librarytrendsv51i1f_opt.pdf?sequence=1 (Accessed 14 April 2014).

Chaplan, M. A. and Hertenstein, E. J. 2005. Role-related library use by local union officials. Institute of Labour and Industrial Relations, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 56 (10). http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/asi.20198/pdf (Accessed 17 July 2016).

Cavaye, A.M.L. 1996. Case study research: a multi-faceted research approach for IS. *Information Systems Journal* 6 (3): 227–242.

Clark, P.F. 2013. *Building more effective unions.* 2nd ed. New York: Cornell University Press.

COSATU Constitution. 2006. http://www.cosatu.org.za/docs/policy/2006/consti2006.pdf (Accessed 21 May 2014).

COSATU Press Statement. 2015. The e-tolls project has become a farce. http://www.cosatu.org.za/show.php?ID=11205 (Accessed November 2016).

COSATU. *Workers' Survey*. 2012. http://www.cosatu.org.za/docs/reports/2012/final%20workers%20surveys%20results%20August%202012.pdf (Accessed 20 May 2014).

COSATU. 11th National Congress Secretariat Report. 2012. http://www.cosatu.org.za/docs/reports/2012/report.pdf (Accessed 15 June 2014).

COSATU. 12th National Congress secretariat report. 2015. http://www.cosatu.org.za/docs/discussion/2015/organisationalreport.pdf (Accessed 15 June 2015).

COSATU. 12th National Congress Special Declaration.  2015. http://www.cosatu.org.za/show.php?ID=11170 (Accessed 30 December 2015).

Coetzee, F. and Kelly, S. 2013. Amendments to the Labour Relations Act: giving unions greater access to organisational rights. http://www.lexology.com/library/detail.aspx?g=7e80bb92-34fe-4fe3-8b17-7bc8b7add6da (Accessed 8 February 2014).

Creswell, J. W. 2003. *Research design: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches*. 2nd ed. London: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. W. 2009. *Research design: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches*. 3rd  ed. London: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J.W. 2015. *A concise introduction to mixed methods research*. 4th ed. London. Sage Publications.

Dansoh, W.A. 2007. An investigation into the provision of information on low-cost housing: a case study of Besg's Tamboville low cost housing project in Pietermaritzburg-

Msunduzi. Masters dissertation. Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Information Studies Programme, School of Social Sciences.

Davy, J. A. and Scheck, C.L.1991. Are union representatives effective communicators during mergers and takeovers*? Labour Studies Journal*: 3-15. http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=3&sid=d218bdfb-a15f-40af-8504-19790d00afa6%40sessionmgr4004&hid=4104. (Accessed 17 June 2014).

Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. 2003. *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials*. 2nd ed. London: Sage Publications.

Dervin, B. 1992. From the mind's eye of the user: the sense-making qualitative-quantitative methodology. In Jack D. Glazier and Ronald R. Powell (Eds.). *Qualitative Research in Information Management*: 68-70.

Department of Labour. 2014. *Labour relations handbook*. Pretoria. Republic of South Africa.

Du Preez, M.D.  2008. Information needs and information-seeking behaviour of consulting engineers: a qualitative investigation. Masters dissertation. Pretoria: University of South Africa http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/1941/dissertation.pdf?sequence=1

Eaton, A, and Kaminski, M 2003. Teaching leadership to union women: the use of stories. *Labour Studies Journal* 28: 2 - 67. http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=9&sid=03ed4414-b0ef-406a-8b70-b704cd54f6f8%40sessionmgr4003&hid=4114  (Accessed 18 July 2014).

Ellis. D. 1989. A behavioural approach to information retrieval design. *Journal of Documentation* 46: 318-338.

Encyclopaedia Britannica Online. 2014. Trade union. http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1357701/trade-union (Accessed  03 April 2014).

Faibisoff, S.G. and Ely, D.P. 1976. Information and information needs, information reports and bibliographies. *Journal of Documentation* 5(5): 2-16

http://faculty.washington.edu/harryb/courses/INFO310/faibisoff_ely.pdf (Accessed 2 May 2014).

Fidel, R. 2008. Are we there yet? Mixed methods research in library and information science. *Library and Information Science Research* 30 (4): 265-272.

Fourie, I. 2002. Suggestions for a research framework for South Africa: how can we learn from web information seeking/searching studies? Masters dissertation. Pretoria: University of Pretoria. Department of Information Science.

Garcia-Molina, H, Koutrika, G, and Parameswaran, A. 2011. Information seeking. *Communications of the ACM* 54 (11): 1-10.

Goncalves, M. 2013. Leadership styles: the power to influence others. *International Journal of Business and Social Sciences* 4(4): 1-3.

Gorman, G.E. and Clayton P. 2005. *Qualitative research for the information professional*. 2nd ed. London: Facet.

Greer, C.R. 2002. E-voice: How information technology is shaping life within unions. *Journal of Labour Research* 23 (2): 215-235.

Guest D.E. and Conway, N. 2004. Exploring the paradox of unionised worker dissatisfaction. *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 35(2): 102-121. http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-8543.2004.00324.x/epdf?r3_referer=wol&tracking_action=preview_click&show_checkout=1&purchase_referrer=onlinelibrary.wiley.com&purchase_site_license=LICENSE_DENIED (Accessed 19 December 2016).

Guyette, S. 1983. *Community-based research: a handbook for native Americans*. American Indian Studies Center: University of California.

Hair, J. F., Wolfinbarger, M., Money, A. H. and Samouel, P. 2015. *The essentials of business research methods*. 3rd ed. New York: Routledge.

Hammer, T.H., Bayazit M. and Wazeter, D.L. 2009. Union leadership and member attitudes: a multi-level analysis.

http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1290&context=articles
(Accessed 12 July 2014).

Henning, E., van Rensburg, W., and Smit, B. 2004. *Finding your way in qualitative research*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Hertenstein, E.J. and Chaplan, M. A. 2005. The effect of training for internet use among local trade union leaders. *New Technology, Work and Employment* 20 (1): 74-85 http://ssrn.com/abstract=688146 (Accessed 10 July 2016).

Hesse-Biber, S.N. and Leavy, P. 2011. *The practice of qualitative research*. 2nd ed. California: Sage Publications.

Humphrey, C. and Lee, B.H.K.  2004. *Real life to accounting research: a behind the scenes view of using qualitative research*. Oxford: Elsevier

Hughes, P. 2001. Paradigms, methods and knowledge. In  MacNaughton, G. S.A. Rolfe, S.A and  Siraj-Blatchford, I. (eds). *Doing early childhood research: international perspectives on theory and practice*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Ingwersen, P. and Järvelin, K. 2005. *The turn: integration of information seeking and retrieval in context*. Dordrecht: Springer.

Ikojo-Odongo, J.R. 2002. A study of information needs and uses of the informal sector in Uganda. PhD thesis. KwaDlangazwe: University of Zululand, South Africa.

Isreal, M. and Hay, I. 2006. *Research ethics for social scientists*. London: Sage Publications.

International Labour Organizations. 2011. "Organizing workers" what meant by organizing workers.   http://www.ilocarib.org.tt/Promalco_tool/productivity-tools/manual09/m9_7.htm (Accessed 19 February 2014).

International Labour Organization. 2007. The role of trade unions in workers' education: the key to trade union capacity building. http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---actrav/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_112434.pdf (Accessed 27 June 2014).

Joia, L. A. 2000. Measuring intangibles corporate assets: linking business strategy with intellectual capital. *Journal of Intellectual Capital* 1 (1): 68-84 http://app.ebape.fgv.br/comum/arq/JIC.pdf (Accessed 13 February 2014).

Kuhlthau, C.C., 1991. Inside the search process: information seeking from the user's perspective. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science* 42: 361-371.

Kamba, M.A. 2007. Access to information: A dilemma for rural community development in Africa. Masters dissertation. Kano: Bayero University Kano Nigeria, Department of Library and Information Science.

Kaminski, M. 2003. Teaching leadership to union women: the use of stories. *Labour Studies Journal*: 67-77. http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/lab/summary/v028.2kaminiski.html (Accessed 12 December 2015).

Kaniki, A.M. 2000. Community profiling and needs assessment. In: Stilwell, C. Leach, A. and Burton, S. (eds). *Knowledge, information and development: an African perspective*. Pietermaritzburg: School of Human and Social Studies, University of Natal: 187–99.

Kaniki, A.M. (1989). Agricultural information needs in Zambia: a study of a two-way information flow. PhD thesis. Pittsburg: University of Pittsburgh.

Kothari, C. R. 1990. *Research methodology: methods and techniques*. New Delhi: Willey Eastern Limited.

Kothari, C.R. 2004. *Research methodology: methods and techniques.* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New Delhi: New Age International.

Kularente, E.D.T. 1997. Information needs and information provision in developing countries. *Information Development* 13 (3): 117-121.

Leach, A. 1999. The provision of information to adults in rural KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, by non-governmental organizations. *Libri* 49 (2): 71-89*.

Leckie, G.J., Pettigrew, K.E. and Sylvain, C. 1996. Modelling the information seeking of professionals: a general model derived from research on engineers, health care professionals and lawyers*. Library Quarterly* 66 (2):161-193.

Lee, S.H. 2005. Chapter Two: Constructing effective questionnaires. http://www.davidlewisphd.com/courses/EDD8006/fall11/2006-Lee.pdf (Accessed 14 January 2016).

Leedy, P.D. and Ormrod, J.E. 2005. *Practical research: planning and design.* 8th ed. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall.

Lowery, C.M., Beadles II, N.A., and Faulk II, L.H. 2008. Accessing the usability of union websites. *Communication of the IIMA* 8 (3). http://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1073&context=ciima (Accessed 18 June 2016).

Lwoga, E. T., P. Ngulube and C. Stilwell. Information Needs and Information Seeking Behaviour of Small-Scale Farmers in Tanzania. *Innovation*44: 126-140.

Majyambere, M. 2012. Information needs and information seeking behaviour of international students at University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus. Masters dissertation. Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal: Information Studies Programme, School of Social Sciences.

Marchionini, G. 1995. *Information seeking in electronic environments*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Manamela, M.E. 2015. The social responsibility of South African trade unions: a labour law perspective. PhD thesis: University of South Africa.

Maree, K. 2007. *First steps in research*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.

McGregor, S.L.T., and Murnane, J. A. (2010). Paradigm, methodology and method: Intellectual integrity in consumer scholarship. *International Journal of Consumer Studies, 34*(4), 419-427.

Mertens, D. M. (2005) *Research methods in education and psychology: integrating diversity with quantitative and qualitative approaches*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Meyers, M.D. 2009. *Qualitative research in business and management*. London: Sage Publication.

Mitchell, M.L. and Jolley, J.M. 2013. *Research design explained*. 8th ed. Belmont: Wadsworth.

Mohanty, S. 2007. Dissemination of information: regional workshop on sharing risk knowledge, loss data collection workshop. [Slides]. Bangkok June. http://www.slideshare.net/sujit29/dissemination-of-information (Accessed 20 June 2014)

Moss, V. 2005. Defend your data. *Credit Union Magazine* 71 (6): 62-63. http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=4&sid=03ed4414-b0ef-406a-8b70-b704cd54f6f8%40sessionmgr4003&hid=4114 (Accessed 18 August 2014).

Morris, R.L. 2002. Trade union administration: a Caribbean workers` guide. International Labour Organization: Caribbean. http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---americas/---ro-lima/---sro-port_of_spain/documents/publication/wcms_224177.pdf (Accessed 27 July 2016).

Munusamy, R. 2015. COSATU congress Vavi-NUMSA after party, a possible thumb up for Ramaphosa, Daily Maverick, 23 November 2015. https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2015-11-23-cosatu-congress-vavi-numsa-after-party-possible-thumbs-up-for-ramaphosa/#.WIH-CKAaK0M (Accessed 19 November 2015).

Mwale, H.K. 2014. An evaluation of trade union effectiveness in the Zambian mining industry: A case for the mine workers of Zambia (MUZ). Masters dissertation. London: University of Greenwich.

Neuman, W.L. 2000. *Social research methods: qualitative and quantitative approaches*. 6th ed. Boston: Allyn and Beacon.

Neuman, W.L. 2011. *Social research methods: qualitative and quantitative approaches*. 7th ed. Boston: Pearson.

Ngulube, P. 2003. Preservation and access to public records and archives in South Africa. PhD thesis. Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal. Information Studies Programme, School of Social Sciences.

Nkomo, N. 2009. A comparative analysis of the web information seeking behaviour of students and staff at the University of Zululand and the Durban University of Technology. Masters dissertation. KwaDlangazwe: University of Zululand, South Africa.

Nzimande, F. 2012. Review. *South African Labour Bulletin* 38 (2): 21-22.

Ikojo-Odongo, J.R. 2002. A study of information needs and uses of the informal sector in Uganda. PhD thesis. KwaDlangazwe: University of Zululand, South Africa.

Panagiontopoulos, P. and Barnett, J. 2014. Social media in union communications: an international study with UNI Global Union Affiliates. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*. http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/bjir.12060/pdf (Accessed 20 June 2014).

Patton, M.Q. 2002. *Qualitative research and evaluation methods.* 3[rd]ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication.

Payne, G. and Payne, J. 2004. *Key concepts in social research*. London: Sage Publication.

Peters, L.D. 1997. Segment reporting and trade unions in South Africa: Masters dissertation. University of Natal. http://search.sabinet.co.za/WebZ/FETCH?sessionid=01-49408-1141032912&recno=6&resultset=2&format=F&next=html/t2/full.html&bad=html/t2/error/badfetch.html&&entitytoprecno=6&entitycurrecno=6 (Accessed 27 May 2014).

Phellas, C.N., Bloch, A. and Seale, C. 2011. Structured methods: interviews, questionnaires and observation. http://www.sagepub.com/upm-data/47370_Seale_Chapter_11.pdf (Accessed 01 September 2014).

Pennsylvania State University 2006. Using surveys for data collection in continuous improvement. *Innovation Insights* 14. http://www.opia.psu.edu/sites/default/files/insights014.pdf (Accessed 12 May 2014).

Powell, R. 1997. *Basic research methods for librarians*. Greenwich: Ablex

Reja, U., Manfreda, K.L., Hlebec, V. and Vehovar, V. 2003. Open-ended vs close-ended questions in questionnaires, developments in applied statistics. http://www.stat-d.si/mz/mz19/reja.pdf  (Accessed 22 March 2016).

Research observatory 2014. Sample or census?
http://ro.uwe.ac.uk/RenderPages/RenderLearningObject.aspx?Context=7&Area=1&Room=3&Constellation=28&LearningObject=156 (Accessed 13 March 2014).

Ramasodi. B. 2009. The information needs of student library users and the fulfilment thereof at the University of South Africa. Masters dissertation. Pretoria: University of South Africa.

Ryan, A.B. 2006 Post-Positivist approaches to research.
http://eprints.maynoothuniversity.ie/874/1/post-positivist_approaches_to_research.pdf (Accessed 2 March 2015).

Sekaran, U. 2003. *Research methods for business*. 4th ed. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons.

Seyama, L. G. 2009. Information seeking behaviour of students with visual impairments: a case study of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg. Masters dissertation. Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal: Information Studies Programme, School of Social Sciences.

Simon, M. 2011. Assumptions, limitations and delimitations. http://dissertationrecipes.com/wp
content/uploads/2011/04/AssumptionslimitationsdelimitationsX.pdf (Accessed 14 March 2015).

Smith, J.G. 1991. Theoretical framework of studying the communication of scientific information in a defined community. *South African Journal of Library and Information Science* 59 (2): 84-94.

Soklic, J. 2004. Changing agenda for trade unions: The case of Slovenia. Masters dissertation. Ljubljana. University of Ljubljana. http://www.cek.ef.uni-lj.si/magister/soklic465.pdf (Accessed 8 April 2016).

Statistics South Africa. 2012. *Quarterly Labour Force Survey*. http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0211/P02114thQuarter2012.pdf (Accessed 14 July 2014).

Statistics South Africa. 2013. *Quarterly Labour Force Survey*. http://beta2.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0211/P02114thQuarter2013.pdf (Accessed 14 July 2014).

Stemler, S. 2001. An introduction to content analysis. ERIC Digest. *ERIC Clearinghouse on Assessment and Evaluation College Park MD*: 1-7 http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED458218.pdf (Accessed 9 September 2015).

Stilwell, C. 2010. Research into information behaviour in the South African context: a preliminary exploration and bibliography: 1980 to date. *Innovation* 40: 1-11.

South African Labour Guide. 2016. Alphabetical list of registered trade unions in South Africa as on June 2016. http://www.labourguide.co.za/trade-unions-in-south-africa (Accessed 28 June 2016).

Terre Blanche, M. and Durrheim, K. 1999. *Research in practice: applied methods for the social sciences*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press.

Terre-Blanche, M. and Durrheim, K. 2006. *Research in practice: applied methods for the social sciences* 5th ed. Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press.

Trochim, W.M.K. 2006. Positivism and post-positivism. http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/positivsm.php (Accessed 12 March 2015).

UMgungundlovu District Municipality. 2014. Annual report. http://www.umdm.gov.za/index.php?option=com_docman&Itemid=221 (Accessed 18 February 2014).

University and College Union. 2014. What trade unions do?
http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/2/d/UCU_factsheet1_unions.pdf (Accessed 28 March
2014).

University of Johannesburg. 2014. Questionnaire design.
http://www.uj.ac.za/EN/Research/Statkon/Documents/Statkon%20Questionaire%20Design.
pdf (Accessed 12 June 2014).

University of KwaZulu-Natal research policy 2014. http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-
Ethics/Human-Social-Science-Ethics.aspx (Accessed 16 October 2014).

Vavi, Z. 2005. COSATU`s 20th Anniversary 20 years of heroic struggle for a better life for
all. http://www.cosatu.org.za/show.php?ID=1543 (Accessed 30 June 2016).

Westbrook, L.1994. Qualitative research methods: a review of major stages, data analysis
techniques, and quality controls.
http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/31470/0000392.pdf?sequence=1
(Accessed 13 May 2014).

White, A. 2012. Why unions should embrace social media. *South African Labour Bulletin*
36 (4): 20-21.

Wildermuth, B.M. 1993. Post-positivist research: two examples of methodological
pluralism. *Library Quarterly: Information, Community and Policy* 63 (4): 450-468.

Williams, M. 2003. *Making sense of social research*. London: Sage Publication.

Wilson, T.D. 1981. On user studies and information needs. *Journal of Documentation* 37:
3-15. http://www.asiaa.sinica.edu.tw/~ccchiang/GILIS/LIS/p658-Wilson.pdf. (Accessed 11
March 2014).

Wilson, T.D.1999. Models in information behaviour research. *Journal of Documentation* 55
(3): 249-264. http://ptarpp2.uitm.edu.my/silibus/model.pdf (Accessed 28 March 2014).

Wilson, T.D. 2000. Human information behaviour, *Informing Sciences special issue on Information Science Research* 3 (2). http://inform.nu/Articles/Vol3/v3n2p49-56.pdf (Accessed 28 March 2014).

Wilson, T.D. 2005. Evolution in information behaviour modelling: Wilson's model. *Journal of Documentation* 55 (3): 249-270. http://www.informationr.net/tdw/publ/papers/2005SIGUSE.html (Accessed 11 March 2014).

Writing Guide. 2004. An introduction to content analysis. http://www.umsl.edu/~wilmarthp/mrpc-web-resources/content-analysis.pdf (Accessed 20 July 2014).

Yukl, G. 2003. *Leadership in organizations*. National College of School of Leadership: New York:

Zhu, J.J.H. and He, Z. 2002. Information accessibility, user sophistication and source credibility: the impact of the internet on value orientations in Mainland China. *Journal of Computer-mediated Communication* 7: http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2002.tb00138.x/full (Accessed 8 May 2014).

**Appendix: 1**

**Letter to union leadership of COSATU affiliated union.**

20 February 2014

To whom it may concern
Dear Leadership of COSATU affiliated unions

Ayanda Mdletshe (student no. 207517964) is a Research Master`s student with the Information Studies Programme, School of Social Sciences at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus. He is shortly going to be embarking on his research project, the proposed subject of which is as follows:

**Information seeking behaviour and dissemination by the leadership of COSATU affiliated unions in the UMgungundlovu District.**

The research aims to get a better understanding of the crucial aspects of information seeking and dissemination by union leadership and by so doing assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the mechanisms employed and the challenges faced in doing so and what the likely solutions, if necessary, are. We are sure that the proposed research will be of interest and possible benefit to union leadership and the trade union movement as a whole.

For Ayanda to undertake this research he does need your approval (in writing) and of course your participation as well.

Needless to say your approval and cooperation in Ayanda's endevour will be highly appreciated and we hope to hear from you shortly.

Many thanks
Yours sincerely

Athol Leach (MIS Programme Coordinator, Information Studies)
Email: leach@ukzn.ac.za
0332605098

**Appendix: 2**

Informed Consent  Document

Dear Participant,

My name is Ayanda Mdletshe 207517964. I am a Masters candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College / Pietermaritzburg Campus. The title of my research is: Information seeking behaviour and information dissemination by leadership of COSATU affiliated unions in the UMgungundlovu District .The aim of the study is to get a better understanding of crucial aspects of information seeking and dissemination by union leadership and by so doing assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the mechanisms employed and the challenges faced in doing so. I am interested in interviewing you so as to share your experiences and observations on the subject matter.

Please note that:

- The information that you provide will be used for scholarly research only.
- Your participation is entirely voluntary. You have a choice to participate, not to participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalized for taking such an action.
- Your views in this interview will be presented anonymously. Neither your name nor identity will be disclosed in any form in the study.
- The interview will take about (*15-30 minutes*).
- The record as well as other items associated with the interview will be held in a password-protected file accessible only to myself and my supervisors. After a period of 5 years, in line with the rules of the university, it will be disposed by shredding and burning.
- If you agree to participate please sign the declaration attached to this statement (a separate sheet  will be provided for signatures)

I can be contacted at: School of Social Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg          Campus,          Scottsville,          Pietermaritzburg.          Email: 2 0 7 5 1 7 9 6 4 @ s t u . u k z n . a c . z a
Cell: 0799692743
My supervisor is Athol Leach who is located at the School of Social Sciences, Pietermaritzburg Campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Contact details: email Leach@ukzn.ac.za   Phone number: 0332605098
My co-supervisor is Siyanda Kheswa who is located at the School of Social Sciences, Pietermaritzburg Campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Contact details: email Kheswak@ukzn.ac.za   Phone number: 0332605097

The Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee contact details are as follows: Ms Phumelele Ximba, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Research Office, Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za,Phone number +27312603587.

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

I……………………………………………………………………… (*full names of participant*) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire. I understand the intention of the research. I hereby agree to participate.

I consent / do not consent to have this interview recorded (if applicable)

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT                    DATE

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

**Appendix: 3**

## Union leadership: Survey Questionnaire

**Instructions for the completion of Questions:**

When answering this questionnaire please use the circles or boxes to tick or cross for your relevant answer.
Where no circles or boxes provided, the spaces in lines are provided for you to answer all questions that are applicable to you.
Please answer all questions as completely and honestly as possible.

**Demographic Data**

1. What is your age?

   a). 18- 25 ⃝          b). 26-35  ⃝          c). 36- 45  ⃝          d). Over 45  ⃝

2. Gender?

   a). Male ☐          b).  b) Fem☐

3. Race?

   a) African ☐            b) White ☐  c) Indian ☐  d) Coloured ☐  Other?
Please specify

   _____

4. Level of education:
   a) Never been to school ☐
   b) Primary               ☐
   c) Secondary             ☐
   d) Tertiary              ☐
   e) Other. Please specify ☐      _____

5. Which language do you mainly use at work when dealing with union related issues?

   a) Zulu ☐      b) English ☐      c) Xhosa  ☐      d) Other? ☐      Please specify_____

6.  Why these languages? Please elaborate.

_____

7.  How long have you been a member of the union? Please specify the number of years.

_____

8. Have you ever been in another union before? If yes how long? Please specify the number of

years.

_____

9. What current leadership position do you occupy in your union?

_____

# Information needs, seeking behaviour and challenges

10. Please describe a major situation/instance that required you to find information about issues affecting you in your union?

_____

_____

_____

 11. How did you go about finding that information to solve the situation or instance? You can give more than one sources of information.

_____

_____

12. Were you successful in getting the information you were looking for?

    a.)  Yes…. ◯      b.)  No…. ◯

13. If yes, how were you successful?

_____

14. If no, why not?

_____

15. What sources of information do you use the most when you are faced with a need or situation that requires information in your union environment? (If applicable you can choose more than one source).

    a. ☐ Library

    b. ☐ TV and radio

    c. ☐ Newspaper

    d. ☐ Books

    e. ☐ Internet

    f. ☐ Colleagues

    g. ☐ Union documents, e.g policies

    h. ☐ Magazines

    i. ☐ Other? Please specify.

_____

16. Can you say that the information you get does address your information needs?

    a). Strongly disagree   ◯

    b). Disagree         ◯

    c). Neutral          ◯

    d). Agree           ◯

    e). Strongly agree    ◯


17. In relation to satisfying your information needs in your union environment which information format is the most preferable to you? (Please tick one)

    a.)   ◯   Print

    b.)   ◯   Audio-visual (TV, Cassette and CDs)

    c.)   ◯   Electronic (word or pdf)

    d.)   ◯   Verbal (one-on-one or meetings)

    e.)   ◯   Other (please specify)

_____

_____


18. List your reasons for selecting your information format?

_____

_____

_____


19. What challenges do you face when looking or searching for information relating to your trade union work?

_____

_____

20. What do you think should be done to address these challenges?

_____

_____

_____


21.  Which method/s or mechanism/s of information provision do you think is/are the most useful in making information available to union members?  You may tick more than one but not more than three.

   a)  Face-to-face
   b)  Emails
   c)  Books
   d)  Newspapers
   e)  Magazines
   f)  Radio
   g)  Television
   h)  Union secretary reports
   i)  Social media (Twitter, WhatsApp)
   j)  Other, please specify? _____


22. If you ticked more than one which method do you consider to be more useful? Please explain your answer.

_____

_____


23. What information provision method or mechanism do you mainly use to provide information to other members in your union environment?

_____


 24. Please explain why you use that particular method (what are the advantages).

_____

_____

25. What do you consider to be the disadvantages of this method to provide information to your union members?

_____

_____

_____

26. What type of information do you provide to union members? You may choose more than one type.

   a.) ◯   Wage increment

   b.) ◯   Job advertisement

   c.) ◯   Union monthly fees

   d.) ◯   Union constitution

   e.) ◯   Union campaigns

   f.) ◯   Changes in labour legislation and policy

   g.) ◯   Union meeting and agendas

   h.) ◯   Union leadership speeches

   i.) ◯   Collective bargaining resolution

   j.) ◯   Congress resolutions

   k.) ◯   Other? Please specify

_____

27. In which format(s) is this information mainly made available to other union members? Please select one format.

   a.) ◯   Print

   b.) ◯   Audio-visual

   c.) ◯   Electronic (word document, pdf)

   d.) ◯   Verbal (one on one or meetings)

   e.) ◯   Other (please specify)

28. Please provide a reason for your answer above?

29. Where (in what situation or context) is this information usually provided to union members? Please explain your answer.

30. What challenges do you face in providing information to union members?

31. What do you think can be done to address these challenges?

**I would like to focus on something specific regarding the information provision scenario. This is in relation to the current crisis regarding NUMSA`s disciplinary hearing from COSATU. Please think about where you are getting information relating to this from, how (in what format) you are getting this information and importantly, how you are getting this information across (providing or disseminating) to your membership". We will also look at the significance of social media in your union. Please answer the following questions relating to this:**

32. What sources of information are you using to get the information relating to the crisis?

33. Why these sources?

_____

_____

34. What format is this information mostly in?

_____

_____

_____

35. How, in the main, are you providing this information to the membership? Why that format?

_____

_____

_____

**The role of social media networks**

36. What role do you think social media such as (Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Blogging) can play in in providing information to your union members? Please explain why you say this.

_____

_____

_____

37. Have you used social media networks to provide information to union members?

    a).  Yes…..◯     b).  No……◯

38. If yes, please could you elaborate? (Please also indicate what application did you use?)

_____

_____

39. If no, please could you indicate why not?

_____

_____

40.  Was the application that you used successful in terms of proving information to your members?

      a).   Yes……◯      b).    No……◯

41. If your answer above is Yes, please elaborate?

_____

_____


42. Would you like to see the union using social media network(s) more as a means of providing information to members?

      a). Yes….◯    b). No …… ◯

43. If your answer is Yes or No can you please elaborate?

_____

_____


44. If there is anything you would like to add concerning information seeking and disseminating by trade union leadership please do so below?

_____

_____


## Thank you very much for your time and assistance!!

**Appendix: 4**

<div align="center">

**Union leadership: Interview schedule**

</div>

The aim of this interview is to get some clarity and follow on to some of the responses that were given in the survey questionnaire. This interview is only meant for those union officials whose positions necessitate the information seeking and dissemination of information within the union.

**Interview starts at** ——————————

1. Which language during this interview do you prefer using?

   ————————————————————————————————

2. In your own understanding, what is the role of information to union?

   ————————————————————————————————

3. How do you see the need to address the information needs of union members?

   ————————————————————————————————

4. Please tell me about sources of information most important for union members in getting information for their needs?

   ————————————————————————————————

5. Can you tell me about the relationship between union leadership and employers in relation to information provision?

   ————————————————————————————————

6. What is the role of information provision amongst the union leadership?

   ————————————————————————————————

7. Tell me about the state of infrastructure or equipment that assists you in rendering information services in your union?

   ————————————————————————————————

8. What is role of union education in information provision? Please elaborate.

_____

9. What form of training does the union provide related to information needs and seeking in general?

_____

10. Current initiatives of information provision provided by the union?

_____

11. If the membership is aware about the initiatives? Please elaborate

_____

12. Tell me about the importance of media briefing in sending information to union members?

_____

13. What can you say about importance of social media like Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp in information seeking and dissemination?

_____

14. Do you have any challenges in getting information across? Please elaborate.

_____

15. What do you think can be done to address these challenges?

_____

16. Any comments in relation to the future of information provision in your union.

_____

17. Any additional comments on information seeking and dissemination.

_____

**Thank you for taking time to participate in this interview**