

**STUDY OF THE INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS
AND INFORMATION USE PATTERN OF THE
MEMBERS OF GRAMA PANCHAYATS
IN KERALA**

**Thesis submitted to the University of Calicut
for the award of the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN
LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE**

By

DINESAN. K.

**Supervising teacher
Prof. M. BAVAKUTTY**



**DEPARTMENT OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE
UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT**

2008

DECLARATION

I, Dinesan K. do hereby declare that the thesis entitled “**Study of the Information Requirements and Information Use Pattern of the Members of Grama Panchayats in Kerala**” submitted to the University of Calicut for the award of the Degree of **Doctor of Philosophy in Library and Information Science** is an original record of study and bonafide research carried out by me under the guidance of **Prof. (Dr.) M. Bavakutty** and that it has not been previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, title or recognition.

Calicut University Campus,
01-03-2008.

DINESAN K

PROF. M. BAVAKUTTY
Professor & Head (Retd.)
Department of Library and Information Science
University of Calicut

Lal Bhavan
Kohinoor
Calicut University P.O.
PIN 673635
Phone:0494 2400112

CERTIFICATE

I, **Dr. M. Bavakutty**, do hereby certify that this thesis entitled “**Study of the Information Requirements and Information Use Pattern of the Members of Grama Panchayats in Kerala**” submitted to the University of Calicut for the award of the Degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** in **Library and Information Science** is a record of bonafide study and research carried out by **Mr. Dinesan K**, under my supervision and guidance and it has not been previously formed the basis for the award of a degree, diploma, title or recognition.

Calicut University Campus,
01-03-2008.

Prof. M. Bavakutty
(Supervising Teacher)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to extend my gratitude and appreciation to those who gave me their valuable time and suggestions in this endeavour. First, I am extremely grateful to Prof. M. Bavakutty, for his guidance and directions throughout the study. This study would not have been possible without his tremendous patience, kindness and valuable time.

I offer my sincere thanks to Dr. Jalaja V, Head of the Department, the teachers and non-teaching staff of the Department of Library and Information Science, University of Calicut for their timely support.

I express my thanks to all the Presidents and Members of the Grama Panchayats covered in the study for providing required data for the study. I also extend my thanks to Dr. Sunanda who has helped me in the statistical analysis of the work and Sri. C. Ramakrishnan, (CR.Com. University of Calicut) for the secretarial work.

I am indebted to my family members and colleagues for their constant support and encouragement.

DINESAN. K

PROF. M. BAVAKUTTY
Professor & Head (Retd.)
Department of Library and Information Science
University of Calicut

Lal Bhavan
Kohinoor
Calicut University P.O.
PIN 673635
Phone:0494 2400112

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that Sri. Dinesan K, Cheruvotte House, P.O. Nanminda, Kozhikode district joined as Part time Research Scholar in the Department of Library and Information Science, University of Calicut on 9.3.2001 FN as per order No. CDC/C4/1818/Lib.Science/2000/C dated 3.3.2001.

Calicut University Campus,
01-03-2008.

Prof. M. Bavakutty
(Supervising Teacher)

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1.1. Introduction

Kerala's decentralisation experiment since mid-1990's has attracted the attention of scholars and policymakers interested in democracy and development the world over. The success and sustainability of decentralised planning depend as much on political will of the state government as on the responses by the elected representatives and people. The concept of popular participation in decision-making has become central within the recent literature of political development and is now considered one of the main objectives of development work. Participatory decentralisation requires more informed representatives and citizens for decision making at the local level¹.

1.2. Information Support for Planning

In participatory planning and development, informed participation makes the participation meaningful. Therefore dissemination of information, access to information by the beneficiaries and ensuring people's right to information are very important for participatory development.² People's true participation is essential for effective planning. When the planning is at the local levels people's involvement is necessary at all stages of planning, implementation and supervision. In local level planning all citizens have the right to participate in their governing, preparation of plans, implementation, evaluation and monitoring. This asserts the citizen's right to inform and to be informed.

The programmes seem to be participatory and decentralised may not be so in reality as the clever keep the participants ignorant of the facts about the matters in which they have to involve. Sometimes the participants are given distorted version of

things, or cleverly keep away the informed and knowledgeable one. Therefore participation in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation can be ensured only if efficient information systems for the people exist to disseminate information and protect people's right to information.

The established media and government's information systems are likely to be incapable of providing information support to the poor villagers and the disadvantaged in local level planning. Kerala has 6000 and odd public libraries that kindle the light of knowledge. They played a very significant role in the Total Literacy Campaign of 1990 in Kerala. These libraries that came up through people's initiative existed and they extended library services to remote corners of the state. As these libraries do not have coordination and cooperation they are not in a position provide information support to decentralised planning.

The information infrastructure of a society has a direct relationship with its nature of socio-economic progress. The economic system that supports every society is in real sense an information system. Effective and efficient development planning and implementation of plans require easy flow of and exchange of information: ³

- a) Among those responsible for development policy and planning,
- b) Among individuals and groups in the community i.e. beneficiaries and participants in development planning, and
- c) Between the planners and beneficiaries.

The planner needs information on all present aspects of the society and also on the recent past, which has created the conditions for the development.

Information and data support needed for development planning are the following: ⁴

- Socio economic information,
- Geographical information,
- Special purpose information,
- Special programme-wise information, and
- Sector-wise information.

The sector-wise information consists of:

- District level information,
- Sub district level information,
- Village level information, and
- Household level information.

There are three distinct but inter-related aspects to be noticed in considering information support to grassroots level development.⁵ They are the following:

1. There should be provision for and communication of pertinent data and information to support rural people's efforts for their own development in agriculture, literacy, health, housing, employment, natural resources conservation and environment matters.
2. The fund of valuable native knowledge related with food, health and medicine, plants and animals, social and cultural value systems, ethno music and arts etc. are to be recorded, processed, disseminated and utilised on a much wider scale. A good part of such information may not be in written or printed form but transmitted orally.
3. Information required for preparing development plans at the local levels, data on demographic aspects, development sectors, social welfare schemes etc. are to be provided to the planners, plan implementers and supporting agencies.

At the state level, State Planning Board is having a large library and information support system that can be used by the top officers of planning. They have also access to other information system at the State Capital. It has been agreed that planning and development should be decentralised. Powers have been delegated to grassroots level, resources have been devolved to Local Self Government Institutions (LSGIs); but knowledge and skill pertaining to local level planning has not been imparted to the Panchayat functionaries and activists. The facilities to provide quality library and information systems that can support LSGIs have not been thought of seriously. No District Panchayat, Block Panchayat or Grama Panchayat has a good library and information system that can provide information support to local level planning. There should be a very efficient library and information infrastructure at every Panchayat which can fulfill the information requirements of the people of the region.⁶

Now it is possible to extend information services of quality and relevance even to remote rural areas with the application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). A villager who is in need of any data from any where in the world at any time he/she requires can access the same. Such an information system can be maintained in our rural libraries. It will be made less costly if the information infrastructure is well planned. Therefore, the rural libraries may be uplifted to Community Information Centres (CICs) by providing the necessary information infrastructure facilities. These centres have to become live spheres of social activity which make the decentralised planning and development real with informed participation. The CICs should act as service outlets of state information infrastructure with the application of ICT. The District Informatics Centre now functioning in the District head quarters may be further expanded and linked to CICs. These centres should look after all the information requirement of the community. It should provide services similar to all that library and information services provided by State Planning

Board at state capital. Development and information support is not for planners and bureaucrats only but for the general public also. This concept is in conformity with UNESCO's vision of knowledge society where everyone has access to information that is relevant to them and where everyone has the opportunity and skills to use their information in meeting their needs and aspirations.⁷

1.2.1. Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA)

Another institution for capacity building of LSGIs is Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA).⁸ It is an autonomous one under the Department of Local Self Government, Government of Kerala which acts as the nodal agency of training, research and consultancy in the areas of local governance.⁹ KILA organises seminars, workshop and discussions on various issues of local governance and development. Apart from training the officials the elected representatives in Kerala, its activities include various programmes for participants from other states in India and abroad. The Ministry of Panchayat Raj, Government of India has initiated steps to declare KILA as a SAARC Centre for Local Governance and development. In addition to the conventional training programmes, other activities include sensitisation of political party leaders, media person, national and international courses in decentralised poverty eradication, action research programme etc. KILA has trained a pool of 550 district level trainers to function as extension faculty members in all the districts of Kerala. In order to meet the training needs of the functionaries from other Indian States; courses are offered in regional languages as well. KILA has translated several documents on Kerala's decentralisation in to English and other regional languages like Hindi, Tamil, Kannada and Bengali.

During 2005-06 KILA has trained 15168 newly elected members of Grama Panchayats and 780 Presidents of Grama Panchayats decentralised planning. It has

trained 235 implementing officers from LSGIs. Training was imparted to 350 performance auditors and 201 local fund auditors. Trainer's training was given to 90 stakeholders. In addition to this, specialised training in certificate course to fifty-eight elected representatives of rural local bodies has been conducted. International course in decentralised governance and poverty eradication has also been conducted.¹⁰ KILA is functioning as a link between Panchayat Raj Institutions and the government.

1.2.2. Information Kerala Mission (IKM)

The Information Kerala Mission (IKM) established in June 1999 for computerising the local bodies in the state had been pursuing one among the most ambitious e-governance programmes in the country. The object of the mission was to computerise all local governments in the state, which now counts to 1223. This holistic and human centered Information Communication Technology (ICT) Project aimed at strengthening decentralised planning and local democracy through good governance, improved service delivery sharing of best practices and building up community knowledge bases for decentralised planning and local area development.¹¹ IKM provides the much required database support for better decision making in development projects and imparts necessary skills to the community to use ICT. It also supports the development initiatives such as 'Akshaya' and 'Kudumbashree' started in the context of decentralised planning. The project strives for strengthening citizen charters prepared by the local governments and helps them implement the citizen charters for fairness and equal opportunity cutting across the barriers of religion, class, caste, creed and gender.¹²

'Akshaya' is a programme for bridging the digital divide, promoting digital literacy, connecting communities, providing access points in an effort to establish a knowledge society in Kerala.¹³ The project intended to set up around three thousand Community Technology Centres across the state. The project has been implemented in

eight district in the state, first being Malappuram District. Around 3.5 lakh people have completed the e-literacy programme and about 1300 Akshaya centres have been set up in the eight districts. This programme is going on in the remaining six district of Kerala. It is intended to set up about 3000 multipurpose Community Technology Centres across the state. Akshaya centres are run by private entrepreneurs within 2 to 3 kilometers of every household to cater to the information, communication and education needs of around one thousand families. Akshaya is envisaged as a social and economic catalyst focusing on the various facets of e-learning, information dissemination and communication facilities to laymen.¹⁴

In spite of the above mentioned information infrastructure the local level planning in Kerala was handicapped with sufficient information support. The awareness of information of the elected representatives and activists has to be developed. Planning activity consists of a series of interactive steps. Establishment of the objectives, identification of activities to be performed, description of the resources, definition and duration of each activity and determination of the sequence of activities – all these phases require different types of information for decision making in different levels of planning. Inadequate, delayed or wrong information can introduce uncertainty and rigidity in the above phases and sometimes leads to failure. It means that if an economic system is to operate well, it must also have an information system that is highly efficient and the planners must be aware about the importance of information.

It was in this context, the investigator proposed to conduct a study of the information requirements and information use pattern of the members of Grama Panchayats in Kerala. The experiences of the investigator in the Total Literacy Programme of 1990 and People's Planning Campaign of 1996-97 provided much enthusiasm in selecting the problem which involves social commitment. At the beginning of the study, it was decided to investigate the information requirements of

the planners in the Peoples' Planning Campaign in Kerala. Since the planners include all the elected representatives, activists, experts, voluntary workers and resources persons, the selection of sample would be cumbersome. Therefore the elected members of the Grama Panchayats, which is the lowest tier of democracy, were selected for the study after discussions with the supervising teacher. The members of Grama Panchayat are elected from among the local people who may or may not be educated, professional and knowledgeable but with better experiences in socio-political activities.

1.3. Local Self Government Institutions (LSGIs) in Kerala

The Kerala Panchayat Raj Act, 1994 envisages the establishment of a three-tier Panchayat Raj system in the state in line with the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992 for securing a great measure of participation of the people in planned development and in local governmental affairs in constituting Village, Block and District Panchayats. This Act endows such Panchayats with such powers and authority to enable to function as LSGIs. The Act entrusts the Panchayats the preparation of plans and implementation of schemes for economic development and social justice in relation to the matters listed in the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution. It extends to the whole of the State of Kerala except the areas which are within the limits of the Cantonments, Nagar Panchayats, Municipal Councils, Municipal Corporations and the industrial areas of the state.

There are 1223 LSGIs in Kerala consisting of 14 District Panchayats, 152 Block Panchayats 999 Grama Panchayats, 5 Corporations and 53 Municipalities as shown in Table 1.1¹⁵

Table 1.1 Region wise Local Self Government Institutions in Kerala

Region	Name of Districts	No. of BP	No. of GP	No. of Corporations	No. of Municipalities
South	Thiruvananthapuram	12	78	1	4
	Kollam	13	71	1	2
	Pathanamthitta	9	54	-	3
	Alapuzha	12	73	-	5
Total	4	46	276	2	14
Central	Kottayam	11	75	-	4
	Idukki	8	52	-	1
	Ernakulam	15	88	1	8
	Thrissur	17	92	1	6
	Palakkad	13	91	-	4
Total	5	64	398	2	23
Northern	Malappuram	14	102	-	5
	Kozhikode	12	78	1	2
	Wayanad	3	25	-	1
	Kannur	9	81	-	6
	Kasargod	4	39	-	2
Total	5	42	325	1	16
Grand Total	14	152	999	5	53

BP-Block Panchayat; GP-Grama Panchayat

1.4. Significance of Information

Information is an essential component of each and every human activity in the world. It is a vital resource to mankind. As the building block of knowledge, information is power and it plays a very important role in the development and progress of a country. Information is a social right and social function. It helps the people to understand the economic and political dimensions of the problem on both national and international planes.¹⁶ Information enables the people to participate in the decision making process.

Various types of human activities, events or incidents generate information. Activities are carried out by individuals or organisations to achieve specific goals.

Events are things that happen, occur or take place. Research and development activities generate new information, which in turn is used as a basis for bringing forth more information. The State itself generates vast amount of information with its organs of executive, judiciary, legislature, business and industry. The over abundance of information and its exponential growth necessitates the organisation and control over in some way or other. In the midst of this exponential growth, retrieval of appropriate and accurate information is a job by itself which calls for the assistance of information workers. Techniques are to be developed for selection, collection, analysis, organization, synthesis, transfer, storage, ordered presentation and communication of information. Traditionally, libraries and information centres played key role in the information transfer and exchange. Ready access to information irrespective of its carriers is vital for individuals as well as for national development. The right information when it is needed and the form in which it is needed is essential to improve the ability of person concerned.¹⁷

Control over information is necessary for the development of a nation. All government policies and decisions are based on the information available with them. In this context, information has been the focus of policy planners and administrators all over the world. The distinction between a developed and a less developed country lies in the control over information and development of strong information infrastructure.¹⁸ The information resources are going to play a vital role in social, cultural and political progress as well as in productive and sustainable development. Any organisation needs these resources in order to ensure effectiveness and efficiency and also to respond and adapt to the actions, attitudes and desires of external agencies such as government, competitors and social groups.¹⁹

It is the responsibility of the state to provide information to the people by establishing an efficient and cost-effective information system. Although the cost of

using information and communication technologies to build national information infrastructure are high, the cost of not doing so are likely to be much higher. Knowledge or information has a revolutionary characteristic. It can be used by the wealthy and poor as well. Knowledge can be shared without any loss unlike wealth. The donor and the recipient become equal without any loss and both get equal capacity to acquire more resources. Hence information is the most democratic source of power. The power holder controls the quality, quantity and distribution of information and knowledge within their domain. But in an equalitarian society, the poor and the marginalised class of people should have access to information. Therefore knowledge should be popularised. Libraries have played significant role in disseminating information to the common people and sometimes kindles revolutions that achieved freedom and established democratic setups. Now Information Technology (IT) has enabled provision of equal access to knowledge and information to every one. In the Five Laws of Library Science, Dr.Ranganathan has established the responsibility of providing information to the users. Each and everyone, irrespective of one's position or status in the society, rich or poor, scholar or illiterate, urban or rural dweller, ill or healthy, must be provided with the information he/she needs.²⁰

Information is essential for effective decentralised governance. The flow of information in public affairs and services management has become an element of good governance. Access to information in decentralised process ensures effective planning and implementation. It helps invoking knowledge, promoting ideas and strengthening the society which in turn results in the development of social capital. It controls misuse and leakages of funds and brings efficiency in the development process. Transparency can be achieved with the right to know and the right to be informed. External transparency helps in knowing locality, local needs, profile of the poor, and the prospective beneficiaries. Internal transparency provides information about the scheme

and budget to the people. When both the information is available, then, there is less chance of corruption, wastages and leakages.²¹

1.5. Users of information

Users are the important factor without which an information system loses its whole purpose. A user of the system puts the system to its purpose. The user had been a much neglected element in the whole information business. It is only recently that emphasis on the user has been laid through the various user studies conducted. The important group of users of information can be distinguished according to the kind of activity in which they are engaged.

Prasad has identified the following types of users of information.²²

1. Researchers in the basic and applied sciences.
2. Practitioners and technicians engaged in developmental and/or operational activities in the various fields of technology and industry: agriculture, medicine, industrial production, communication etc.
3. Managers, planners and other decision makers who are engaged in developmental activities in both private and public sector.

However user groups can be identified according to many other characteristics like age, professional position, occupation etc. The above mentioned users need information with specific content for realising specific functions. Such information needs of users have to be satisfied by providing objective information. Thus information need is a condition in which certain information contributes to the achievement of a genuine or legitimate information purpose. Tague has presented the following types of information needs.²³

1. Social or pragmatic information needs: Information required coping with day to day life;
2. Recreational information needs: Information satisfying the recreational and cultural interests of an individual:
3. Professional information needs: information required to operate competently within a professional or business environment; and
4. Educational information needs: information required to satisfy academic requirements of an institution.

1.6. User Studies

Although information need is a part of user studies, actual emphasis was laid on study of information needs and seeking behaviour during post 1950s era. The Royal Society Scientific Information Conference (1948) undertook several important surveys on user's information seeking behaviour. During 1960's, the works of M.B.Line, Michale Brittain, Menzel, Paisley through their various articles published in Annual Review of Information where the study on Information Requirement of Social Scientists, popularly known as INFROSS was conducted.²⁴ Several models for the improvement of the existing state of information user studies have been devised later. An analysis of the literature on information needs and uses suggests that all these studies belong to two categories:

i) Studies that focus on user study with a shift on emphasis to information seeking behaviour during 1950s: In such studies attempts were made to depict the characteristics of the users as a sociological group explaining information needs and how to satisfy them.

ii) Studies that focus on the information retrieval and information system design; the investigations mainly contributed in designing information retrieval strategies that might assist the users in representing their needs.

The information systems were developed and refined to meet the information requirements of the users in a better way.²⁵ The concept of information needs is the outcome of the combination of two terms 'information' and 'needs'. In a restricted sense, the term information denotes a sensible statement, opinion, fact, concept or idea or an association of statements or ideas. It is instrumental and is usually communicated in an organised or formalised pattern, mainly because, such formalisation increases potential utility. Every one remains engaged in some assignments or other that are significant for him/her. These activities are usually designed to achieve the target, whether someone is a farmer, teacher, physician, or an activist. Each one is so heavily engaged in his/her respective areas of activities which might necessitate the help of some other elements that bring success to their work. It is termed as 'need' or 'requirement'. In this connection, it can be assumed that, these professional more or less depend upon information to update their knowledge or to answer their queries of some kind or other. To be full fledged or self sufficient on one's view there is a great necessity of adequate and appropriate information at the right time. The lack of self-sufficiency in one's part therefore constitutes one's information needs. The information needs represent gaps in one's correct knowledge that makes him/her quite satisfied with a given situation of work environment.

1.7. Decentralised Planning in Kerala

There were many efforts in the past towards democratic decentralisation in India; Village Panchayats were central to the ideological framework of the national movement for political freedom. Mahatma Gandhi categorically described his vision of Village Panchayats in a 1942 issue of the 'Harijan'.

“My idea of village Swaraj is that it is a complete republic independent of its neighbour for its own vital wants and yet independent for many others in which dependence is a necessity..... The Government of the village will be conducted by the panchayat. These will have all the authority and jurisdiction required.”²⁶

The recommendations of the Team for the study of Community Projects and National Extension Service, headed by Balwantrai G. Mehta (1958) and the report of Ashok Mehta Committee (1977) were the milestones in the history of Panchayat Raj in India. The failure of earlier efforts was mainly due to the resistance offered by vested interests, lack of pressure from below, paucity of expertise and preparedness at the local level. However states like Rajasthan, Karnataka and West Bengal have provided valuable insights for future attempts towards decentralised planning.²⁷

The history of local self-government in Kerala has not been different from the rest of India. It was only in 1990 that the State came to have elected bodies at the district level for the first time.²⁸ But the amendment made by the new government that took office in 1991 restricted the powers of District Councils.

The 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments became a landmark in democratic decentralisation in the country giving PRIs the required constituent legitimacy. The Kerala Panchayat Raj Act, 1994 and Kerala Municipality Act, 1994 prescribed a uniform three-tier LSGIs: the district, taluk/block and village levels in the rural areas and town panchayats in smaller urban centres besides the traditional municipalities and corporations in the larger urban centres. The LSGs were to have a uniform five-year term and in the event of dissolution, elections were to be held within six months. Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe representation proportionate to the population and one-third reservation for women were introduced at all levels. A state finance commission was to be appointed by every state government to decide on revenue sharing with the LSGIs. District Planning Committees (DPC) in every district were to

be constituted.²⁹ Thus the constitutional amendments were the landmark in the evolution of LSGIs in India and especially the peoples campaign for decentralised planning in Kerala.

The participation of people's representatives was only ensured in the earlier experiments of decentralisation in India. The Panchayat Raj/Nagarapalika bill envisages maximum participation of people in planning. The Grama Sabhas (GS) act as the most important units in which the felt needs of the people are represented and formulated as plans. Even though the above bill came to existence, the rules and regulations were not formed in this regard. Devolution of staff and institutions were not taken place. The elected representatives were also newcomers and they lacked previous experience in participatory governance. The non-availability of data and information required for the integrated planning was another drawback. In spite of these drawbacks and weaknesses, it was decided to go head by participating the people and voluntary organisations behind the people's representatives. Thus a public campaign approach was accepted.

The decision to devolve 35-40 percent of the state plan funds to the local bodies was taken by the Government. The meeting of State Planning Board held in July 1996 decided to recognize ninth plan as people's plan and it was accepted by the Government of Kerala. The government announced that local places would be prepared in all the LSGIs in Kerala. Thus the people's campaign for decentralised planning was introduced in Kerala on 17th August 1996 through the launching of 'Janakeeyasoothnam' in a campaign model.³⁰

The People's Planning Campaign (PPC) reversed the traditional sequence by first developing the resources and powers and then attempting to clear the obstacles to implementation as they arose the state level, there was a High level Guidance Council (HLGC) composed of all the members of Kerala Legislative Assembly, all the 20

parliament members from Kerala, Senior State Government Officials, leaders of mass organisations, artists, literary figures and cultural leaders. The HLGC was headed by late E.M.S Namboodirippad, the first Chief Minister of Kerala and a panel of Vice-Chairpersons consisting of all living former Chief Ministers of Kerala and other dignitaries like K.N.Raj, V.R.Krishna Iyer and Sukumar Azhikode. The Local Administration Minister was the convener of the Council, which was an advisory body of elders to advise the State Planning Board in the conduct of the campaign.³¹

It should be realised that all the preparations and pre-planning could not have been created at the time when the campaign was unfolded. They were possible because many of the planning techniques, appropriate technologies and organisational forms had been developed experimentally in numerous micro development projects spread over earlier decades. The experiments organised by Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP) the People's Science Movements in Kerala were the excellent ones.³² Governmental and Non-Governmental agencies, co-operatives and local bodies were also involved in designing and experimenting various projects. Some of the most important micro-level development experiments are listed below:³³

1. Group Approach for Locally Adapted and Sustainable Agriculture (GALASA)
2. The people's Vegetable Cultivation Programme, Kanhikuzhy
3. Water conservation: Kunnothparamba
4. Animal Husbandry: The Peringome-Vayankara Integrated Project
5. People's Artificial Fishing Reefs
6. Industry: Kerala Dinesh Beedi
7. Health: The Tanalur People's Health Programme.
8. Drinking water: The Olavanna Model
9. Sanitation: Thrikunnapuzha 'Wat San'

10. COSTFORD and Least Waste Building technology
11. Poverty alleviation: The CDS Project, Alapuzha
12. Education: The KSSP experiments
13. The Total Literacy Campaign
14. The People's Resource Mapping Programme (PMRP)
15. Energy efficiency: Smokeless Chulhas
16. Small Scale Electricity Production, Meenvallam
17. A Local Planning Model: Kalliassery.

All the above micro level development experiment contributed much either by the personal involvement of the key organisers or because they were used as models for emulation in campaign propaganda. It also indicates the vibrant local level initiatives that characterised Kerala even before the campaign was launched. The International Congress on Kerala Studies organised in August 1994 by the A.K.G. Centre for Research and Studies, Thiruvananthapuram gave a new thrust to the new thinking and helped to build a general consensus on the development agenda of Kerala.³⁴

Execution of decentralised planning commenced under the auspices of 1215 LSGIs then existed in Kerala. People interacted with these programmes with great enthusiasm. Decentralised planning added momentum to the development of Kerala. The programme could rally the mass aiming at development concept beyond about drastic changes in the development sectors through the co-ordination of the public, people's representatives, technical experts and government servants. Decentralised participatory planning in Kerala has proved to be a role model to the whole India.³⁵

The campaign basically aimed to solve the strong antagonistic trends in the field of local development. There were short-term and long-term objectives. The major short-term objectives were:

- 1) To improve the production sector through revitalising the various sub sectors including agriculture, animal husbandry, fishing and small scale industries.
- 2) To improve quality of service sector.

The major long-term objectives were:

- 1) To create comprehensive changes in the approach to the overall development of the state.
- 2) To promote a development culture for local development irrespective of socio-political diversity.

Under the State Planning Board acting as the apex body, the campaign was conducted in seven phases starting from conducting of Grama Sabhas in 1996 to Plan integration in 1997. Since it is of utmost importance to provide sufficient institutional capacity building, at the out set itself, extensive training were given to the elected representatives and officials working centre campaign as well as the planning process. Direct participation of people in the planning process was ensured at the Grama Sabhas.

In order to make an objective assessment of the natural and human resources, a series of participatory studies including secondary data collection, study of local geography and natural resources through transect walks and consolidation of Grama Sabha report were conducted. Based on that, a Development Report (Vikasana Rekha) was made for each local body with an overall development perspective. These were presented before a Development Seminar and from there onwards, annual plans were prepared at the Grama Sabha level for each local body.

Project formulation and consolidation were done by task forces (Karma Samitis) for various development sectors.³⁶ There were 12 development sectors in the 9th

plan and sector for welfare of weaker sections was subsequently included in the 10th plan. The 13 development sectors are given in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2. Development Sectors in decentralised planning

Sl. No	Name of the Development Sector
1	Agriculture and Irrigation
2	Animal Husbandry and Fisheries
3	Health
4	Education
5	Industry
6	Energy and Housing
7	Transport
8	Drinking water and Sanitation
9	Women and Development
10	Welfare of Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes
11	Culture
12	Welfare of Weaker Sections
13	Resource Mobilisation

Training was also given to task force members in order to formulate the project proposals. About twelve thousand task forces were constituted at the village level alone with a total participation of about 1.2 lakh members.³⁷ Technical input was given to the projects by Expert Committees at various levels. Thus a system of planning process was implemented beginning with annual plan preparation at the Grama Sabha, which were approved by the DPCs and finally implemented and monitored at the local body level.

The United Democratic Front (UDF) Government that came to power in 2001 took steps to institutionalise the PRIs in the State. In 2002-2003, under the tenth Plan,

the decentralisation programme was renamed as Kerala Development Plan.³⁸ The three main thrusts of the Kerala Development Plan were:

- i) Institutionalisation and building sustainable capacity in PRIs;
- ii) Catalysing economic development through PRIs; and
- iii) Improving the quality of services, particularly in health and education.

In the 10th plan, five year plans were prepared by the PRIs that allow them greater room for long term planning with an emphasis on development. The concept of Anti Poverty Sub Plan was introduced and as a part of this initiative, specific projects for destitute were prepared (Ashraya Project) by the LSGIs.

In addition to the twelve development sectors of the ninth plan, tenth plan insisted that the LSG's should earmark five percent of the plan allocation for the benefit of children, disabled and aged under the development sector-welfare of the weaker sections. The task forces and Expert Committees of ninth plan have been replaced by Working Groups and Technical Advisory Committee respectively³⁹.

Neighbourhood Groups (NHGs)⁴⁰ are formed in all LSGIs. Even though they are not statutory bodies, they are functioning as a grassroots forum for direct citizen participation in governance. The NHGs are carrying out all the functions of Grama Sabhas such as discussion of local plan, review of plan implementation as well as selection of beneficiaries. They are not functioning as a substitute but as a supplement to the Grama Sabha. The representatives of NHGs often constitute the ward committee, which in most case acts as an executive committee of Grama Sabha. NHGs have helped to improve the functioning of Grama Sabhas in Panchayats.

Kudumbashree is a women oriented poverty eradication programme with women's empowerment as one of its major goals. It was begun in 1998 by the government of Kerala with the aim of eliminating poverty within ten years, by 2008.

The present structure of this initiative consists of a three-tiered system. The NHG's composed of women from BPL (Below Poverty Line) households forms the lowest level. These NHG's are federated into Area Development Societies (ADS) at the ward level. The Area Development Societies were in turn federated into a Community Development Society (CDS) at the Panchayath/Municipal level. The success of the CDS model in Urban Alapuzha and in rural Malappuram led the government of Kerala to scale up the strategy to the whole of the state in 1998 under the name Kudumbashree, with the State Poverty Eradication Mission taking the responsibility of implementation through the Department of Local Self-Government.⁴¹ The Kudumbashree has since followed a multifaceted strategy. It includes convergence of various government programmes and resources at the community-based organization. Efforts were made to involve the CDS structure in local level anti-poverty planning and development of women's micro enterprises and thrift and credit societies.

The decentralized planning process in Kerala could attain a few physical achievements. But there exists a number of drawbacks too.⁴² Detailed study about the development issues and potentials of the planning area is necessary before formulating development projects. In-depth study and analysis of such aspects are lacking in the process. Location of economic activities should have been decided on the basis of scientific criteria. Here, local interest mostly gets the upper hand. Functional character of an area is determined by the aggregate functions of all sectors of economy concentrated therein. Development of an area therefore requires a deliberate integration of at least a few key sectors. Here, various working groups representing different development sectors prepare the annual projects, which are rather compartmentalised and never integrated.

At Grama/Ward Sabha level, individual benefits get predominance over ward level or city level projects which are a clear indication of lack of approach to overall

local development. At local level, development projects are formulated without considering the overall development needs of the district showing lack of vision in regional context. Since this is only allocative and sectoral in nature, the spatial investments are not considered, which restrains planned development. In other words this is a piece meal approach to development. Project identification and formulation is done in a short time span. In the absence of a development vision derived from extensive study and analysis, this often leads to the formulation of trivial and unviable projects resulting in wastage of financial resources.

In a nutshell, it may be viewed that all these drawbacks point towards the need for a guide lines for the preparation of most suitable projects for a local body with a holistic approach to plan formulation. An uninterrupted flow of development information vertically and horizontally among the planners, elected representatives, activists and government staff is essential for the holistic approach. The awareness of information and the capability of the members of Grama Panchayats in Kerala should be viewed very seriously so as to ensure the social capital and the overall development of our state.

1.8. Significance of the Study

Informed participation of people is supposed to be the key to effective decentralized planning. Planning is an endeavor oriented towards future. It has to rely on knowledge of attributes of the various components of the society, the plan covers. This implies that planning is a way of dealing with information. In multilevel and multi objective planning, there will be several groups of information users at different levels with different information requirements. As decentralized planning is area specific and people specific, information should be provided on the cultural and behaviour patterns, assets ownership system and the capacities of the institutions of the locality. Hence it is highly essential to understand the information requirements of the

group of people who play vital role in local level planning. It is the principal objective of the study and the members of the GPs in Kerala constitute the population.

At the outset of People's Planning Campaign (PPC), the LSGIs were not equipped with expertise, infrastructure or the information base to take up the task of making development plans. Local knowledge on development problems is of great importance. Thus it was decided to establish a system at the village level in which the villagers themselves harness such scattered information and knowledge to be used in future development plans. Therefore, a better understanding and use of indigenous knowledge in local experience and knowledge need to be blended with information on modern technological alternatives for maximum outputs. Effort has been made to understand the awareness of the members of GPs regarding local knowledge.

The information sources used by the group under investigation have to be identified for the proper organisation of an information support system. The study proposes to examine the different types of information sources used by them and the preferences in use. In the decentralized planning, there should be an efficient information support system at the local levels that makes available the right information at the right time. Unfortunately, most of the rural libraries in Kerala are not in a position to provide such type of information required by the policy makers or the general public in their day-to-day activities. The elected representatives are supposed to have a general awareness about different development sectors and the sources of information about them. Therefore, it has been tried to assess the information literacy of members of GPs in general and particularly awareness regarding development information. It has also been proposed to examine whether an information support system is necessary for decentralised planning and development at the local levels.

The investigator has reviewed a vast amount of related literature. Studies have been conducted to understand the information requirements, information seeking behaviour and information use pattern of different category of people and professionals. A good number of researchers have studied different aspects of PRIs and decentralised governance in India. There are also some international studies on decentralization. After the launching of PPC in Kerala, Social Scientists have conducted micro and macro level studies in respect of socio-economic and political factors of participatory planning and development. Some studies focused about people's participation, disadvantaged groups, transparency, accountability etc. It is rare to find a study which deals with information requirements of the members of LSGIs in general. There is hardly a study dealing with information seeking behaviour of the members of GPs in any of the states of India. To sum up, there is no comprehensive study available which deals with the information requirements and information use pattern of the members of GPs in Kerala.

The participatory local level planning in Kerala is unique when compared to other Indian States. It has also attracted global attention. The findings of the study may be useful in strengthening the information base of local level planning and governance. The information needs of the elected representatives of GPs, the availability of information, the communication channels the satisfaction of users with regards to the needs of information etc. are very serious to an information professional. In this context, there is an imperative need for an in- depth study focusing on these areas.

1.9. Statement of the Problem

The investigation is entitled as **“Study of the Information Requirements and Information Use Pattern of the Members of Grama Panchayats in Kerala”**.

1.10. Definition of Key Terms

The key terms in the title of the study are defined and given in the following subsections.

1.10.1. Study

The word 'study' means a careful examination or analysis of a phenomenon, development or question. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines study 'as the activity of learning or gaining knowledge, either from books or by examining things in the world'.⁴³

1.10.2. Information Requirements

In general parlance 'information' means something which gives knowledge in the form of facts and 'requirements' mean something that is needed or wanted in order to do something else. Ane's Encyclopedic Dictionary of Library and Information Science defines information requirements 'as a gap in a person's knowledge which when experienced at the conscious level as a question, gives rise to a search for an answer'.⁴⁴ In the context of the present study, information requirements refers to the information needed by the Grama Panchayat Members to actively participate in the decentralised planning and local governance in Kerala.

1.10.3. Use Pattern

Chambers 20th Century Dictionary⁴⁵ defines use as 'to put to some purpose' and pattern as 'a regular way of acting or doing'. In the context of the present study, use pattern refers to the method of acquiring or using the information sources and services available for the Grama Panchayat Members.

1.10.4. Members of Grama Panchayat

Members of the Grama Panchayat are the representatives elected by the voters of the ward according to the rules and regulations of the Election Commission. The Grama Panchayats are the lowermost tier of Local Self Government Institutions responsible for grassroots level planning and local governance.

1.10.5. Kerala

The southern most state in India formed in November 1st, 1956 with the joining of Travancore – Cochin State and Malabar. The State of Kerala has been conventionally divided into 3 regions such as Southern, Central and Northern Kerala. Its area of 15,000 Sq.miles comprises just one per cent of the total land area of India though its 30 million population accounts for 3.3 per cent of Indian population.

1.11. Scope and Limitations of the Study

The study proposed here is to examine the information requirements and to understand the information use pattern of the members of Grama Panchayats in Kerala in the context of decentralized planning. The elected representatives of Grama Panchayat constitute a very important group of the local level planners and they are supposed to be the decision makers in executing the plans and projects in the Grama Panchayats. Therefore their awareness of information plays a key role in the performance of Grama Panchayats.

There are 16139 elected representatives in 999 GPs in Kerala. The study of all the population is not possible as it is time consuming and expensive. A sample of 40 GPs with 647 members has been selected for the study and the members from 32 Grama Panchayats responded. The entire districts except Idukki have been represented in the sample. All the GPs of Kerala are functioning under the same rules and procedures. Therefore the study of 32 GPs of 32 BPs in three regions of Kerala with

four hundred and thirty five members of GPs will be a representative sample. This limitation may not distort the findings in any way because all categories of members capturing generic features of the Panchayats of Kerala were represented in the sample. The present study deals only the information infrastructure available to support the local level planning in Kerala. The economic background of the members has not been taken into account as there is less chance of getting the accurate data. In many cases, the respondents used to romanticise the answers so as to dominate themselves. However the pattern of questionnaire helped to reduce the ambiguities.

The selection of Grama Panchayat members only excluding the elected members of other LSGIs such as District Panchayat, Municipalities, Corporations and Block Panchayats is a limitation of the study. The omission was deliberate on the assumption that the members of the above LSGIs have comparatively better access to information.

1.12. Organisation of the Report

The thesis has five Chapters. Different aspects in each chapter are arranged in the following pattern.

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

- 1.1. Introduction
- 1.2. Information Support for Planning
- 1.3. Local Self Government Institutions in Kerala
- 1.4. Significance of Information:
- 1.5. Users of information
- 1.6. User Studies
- 1.7. Decentralised Planning in Kerala
- 1.8. Significance of the Study
- 1.9. Statement of the Problem

- 1.10. Definition of Key Terms
- 1.11. Scope and Limitations of the Study
- 1.12. Organisation of the Report
- 1.13. Conclusion

CHAPTER 2: Review of Related Studies

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Studies Conducted Abroad
- 2.3. Studies Conducted in India
- 2.4. Studies Conducted in Kerala
- 2.5. Conclusion

CHAPTER 3: Methodology

- 3.1. Introduction
- 3.2. Research Objectives
- 3.3. Hypotheses
- 3.4. Research Design
- 3.5. Summary of Methodology

CHAPTER 4: Analysis of the Study

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2. General Information about Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala
- 4.3. Information Needs of Grama Panchayat Members
- 4.4. Information Sources of Grama Panchayat Members
- 4.5. Communication Channels of the Grama Panchayat Members
- 4.6. Local Knowledge in Decentralised Planning
- 4.7. Awareness of Digital Information by the Grama Panchayath Members
- 4.8. Information Support to Decentralised Planning in Kerala
- 4.9. Capability Building among the Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala
- 4.10. Conclusion

CHAPTER 5: Summary of Findings, Tenability of the Hypotheses and Suggestions

- 5.1. Introduction

- 5.2. Major Findings
- 5.3. Tenability of Hypotheses
- 5.4. Suggestions for Improvement
- 5.5. Suggestion for Further Research
- 5.6. Conclusion

1.13. Conclusion

The study has provided details of the execution of decentralised planning in Kerala. The Grama Panchayat Members need various information in performing their duties in local planning and governance. After the commencement of decentralised planning, the powers and responsibilities of the panchayat staff and the members have increased. Certain Grama Panchayats of Kerala could not complete the projects prepared by them without proper study. The viability of the projects was not studied in detail. The number of spill over projects in many Grama panchayats also indicates the lack of awareness on the part of the members. They undertook projects for the sake of getting benefits to their wards by their political influence. All these show the lack of data about the land and people, natural resources, human resources and other primary data required for local planning. The lack of awareness of the members about the different aspects of local level planning affects the performance of Grama Panchayats. The State Government, Department of Panchayats and voluntary organisations through their committed efforts can overcome this unfortunate situation by setting up robust information infrastructure for decentralised planning in Kerala.

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2.1 Introduction

The emergence and existence of literature is so extensive that a critical approach of related studies is inevitable for any organized study or research. So the review of literature is one of the most important aspects of investigation. It helps to know what is done by other researchers in any specific subject and helps to have a general understanding of the specific subject. The areas that are not explored earlier can be identified while reviewing the related literature. Review of literature also avoids duplication of research and gives an orientation to general problems. It narrows down the scope of investigation so that greater depth can be achieved. Familiarizing the methods and procedures used successfully by others who have handled similar problems elsewhere is another advantage of literature review. Literature search is an attempt to identify, locate and synthesise completed research reports, articles, books and other materials about the specific problems of research topic. In general, the review of related literature in any piece of research activity acts as a bridge that connects the background of the topic and the current problem under study. The review of literature also helps to indicate research gaps.

A number of studies have been conducted on the use of information by different category of people in foreign countries and in India. But the use of information by the members of Local Self Governments in India is less documented. The related studies reviewed in this chapter are broadly classified into three sections based on geographical area of the studies. Twenty-two relevant studies selected are conducted in the international level, twenty-five in national level and five in Kerala. The studies under each section are given in the chronological order.

2.2 Studies Conducted Abroad

Out of the twenty-two studies conducted in foreign countries, three of them are related with the information needs and information seeking behaviour of Parliamentarians, Social workers and Local Union Officials. The remaining studies deal with information needs of different type of users in different sectors.

Bigdeli (2007)¹ in this descriptive research attempted to investigate the information seeking behaviour of engineers at Khuzestan Sugar-Cane and By-Product Company in Iran. To collect the data, a questionnaire was distributed using Likert-type questions with six points ranging from 'never use' to 'very useful'. Of the 250 questionnaires distributed, 158 (63.2%) were used in the data analyses. The Cronbach Alpha measured the reliability coefficient, which was 0.81 Analysis of variance and the Turkey test were used to test the sole hypothesis of the research and to see if engineers who worked in various sites were different in their information seeking behaviour. To answer the research questions, descriptive statistics were employed. The results showed that the engineers in different work areas were significantly different in terms of information-seeking behaviour. The most important motivations for seeking information were: to develop their knowledge and expertise; to be able to use new job-related technologies and to be up-to-date in their specialty. Distance appears to have impact on information use and information-seeking behaviour of engineers. Thus, librarians must consider the Zipf's 'principle of least effort' in serving their clients.

Jackson, et al (2007)² studied the information requirements and information seeking behavior of health and social care professionals providing care to children with health-care needs. The objectives of this work were to identify the sources of information currently received, information seeking behaviors, information requirements and preferences for future information provision amongst health and social care professionals providing care to children with health care needs. Data were

collected using a cross-sectional postal questionnaire survey. A wide range of information resources was reported as being available to professionals. However, a large proportion of respondents found it necessary to perform additional searches for information, suggesting that current resources were not satisfying their needs. The majority of professionals reported a preference for electronic formats, whilst a smaller proportion preferred hard copy materials. Participants promoted the use of informal networks as a means of support and exchange of information. Supplementing the information that is provided in electronic and hard copy formats, by enhancing informal networks, may be the most effective way of meeting the information needs of this group of professionals.

Baruchson-Arbib, et al (2006)³ have investigated the community information needs of the urban Israeli population using a telephone survey of 304 residents of a medium-sized city in central Israel and interviews with community officials in the city's social system. The purpose of the study was to identify the information needs of the urban community and its preferences, in order to establish the first formal public library's information center in Israel. Approximately 60% of the problems cited by the subjects are concentrated in five categories: neighborhood matters; studies; transportation; government matters; and entertainment, leisure and recreation. In most of the categories the percentage of local topics exceeds the percentage of general topics (i.e. topics not necessarily related to the community where the subjects live). Of all the problems (1,067) raised by the subjects, the percentage consulting dedicated information sources was 41.2%, and the percentage consulting general information sources was 29.6%. The findings of the survey showed that the subjects clearly prefer information channels that offer personal contact (e.g. by telephone or face-to-face meeting with professionals). In contrast to the findings of many other studies, informal personal contacts (e.g. family members, friends) was ranked last place. In the

interviews, community officials admitted that they receive numerous requests for information for assistance in solving problems on a wide range of topics that are not in their sphere of activity. The analysis of the data from both methods indicated a lack of sufficient and accessible information sources and underscored the importance of public libraries as major community information centers. Following the results of this study, the librarians at the public library in the city where the data were collected are establishing the first official community information center in Israel.

Jorosi (2006)⁴ in his study investigated the information needs and information seeking behaviours of SME (Small and Medium Sized Enterprises) managers in Botswana's manufacturing industry, using a self-administered questionnaire. The respondents were largely male (171 or 79%) while only (45 or 21%) were female. The key findings of the study indicated that: (1) SME managers consider customer and competition information to be the most important types of information to their firms; (2) SME managers devote a significant amount of time to achieve information seeking and on average spend approximately five hours per week seeking information; (3) SME managers spend time seeking customer and competition information; (4) they use both personal (e.g. customers, business associates) and impersonal sources (broadcast media and government publications); (5) information source selection is largely determined by accessibility and ease of use; and (6) managers use information for making important decisions and performing their routine activities. Several recommendations are made for future research in information behaviour of managers and mainstream user studies. Replication of this study with a different sample of firms would be highly useful.

Mabawonku (2006)⁵ conducted a study to understand the information environment of women in Nigeria's public service. Women constitute a significant proportion of the Nigerian public servants. They have varied job related information

needs and possess some information seeking behaviour. The study aimed to identify their job related information needs and assess the existing office information environment. The survey method, using questionnaire and observation techniques were used in collecting data from 158 women in the top cadre of the federal and three selected state ministries and parastatals. The study found that most of the information needs were related to governance, education, religion, family and domestic matters. Only one-third of the respondents regarded information on women as very relevant to job performance. Newspapers, magazines, newsletters, colleagues, and conversations were the main sources of information. Although electronic sources, especially internet were not widely available, the respondents were enthusiastic to use them. They also perceived positive relationship between good information environment and job performance. A limitation of the study was the small sample considering that there are 36 states in Nigeria. Also, a study of all public servants, male and female, would have been better. The paper recommends an improvement to the information environment of the government establishments. As not many studies have been done on women in public service and their information needs and use, the findings of this study will be useful to government and other decision makers in providing facilities and for infrastructure development to increase productivity of women and all public servants.

Osei and Entsua-Mensah (2006)⁶ examined the information seeking behaviour of Agricultural Extension Agents (AEAs) as well as the roles of the various institutions that are supposed to meet the information needs. AEAs form an important link between researchers and farmers in the agricultural production chain. However, although AEAs provide information to run successful agricultural businesses, the link between AEAs and researchers is very weak and the tendency is for AEAs to become ineffective. Most of these AEAs do not make the effort to look for information because they are far from the information sources or the infrastructure is simply not available. Most districts lack

libraries and information centers and the district agriculture offices do not have print agricultural collections that can be consulted by AEAs. The District Agricultural Offices should not only be stocked with relevant materials for use by AEAs, but also connected to the internet to enhance access to information by staff as well as AEAs. Finally, a publication dedicated to the needs of AEAs could be started on a quarterly basis and should contain information on improved technologies and good agronomic practices, repackaged in such a way as to enable AEAs to transfer them to farmers.

Tumba and Daya (2006)⁷ have studied the information needs of practicing geologists in Maiduguri metropolitan, Borno State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the investigation were:

- i) To identify the information needs of geologists in Maiduguri Metropolitan Area.
- ii) To identify their information seeking behaviour.
- iii) To understand the adequacy of information resources available where they operate and
- iv) To identify what professional associations if any, to meet the geologists' information needs.

Questionnaire and interview were the major tools used by the investigators to elicit information from the individual geologists. A total of 18 questionnaires were administered to the practicing geologists of Maiduguri metropolitan area. The institution and organizations which constitute the population study area are Borno State Water Board (BSWB), Chad Basin Development Authority (CBDA), Federal Ministry of Mines & Power (FMMP); Geological Survey, Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) and Raw Material Research & Development Council (RMRDC). Eleven geologists returned the completed questionnaires and they were also interviewed. The study revealed that the geologists get their information mostly from

journal articles and the newsletters of their various associations, which they belong to. Institutional libraries could not meet their information needs and majority of them rely on their field experiences and informal meetings with colleagues. The practicing geologists belong to different specializations such as hydrologists, environmental geologists and mineral geologists and they require different types of information sources. It was also found that the practicing geologists need information so as to enable them keep up-to-date with activities in their fields and to understand the geological conditions and exploitable potentials of resources through field work and researches. The investigators recommend the need for libraries and information practitioners to understand the information requirements of the users so as to provide efficient and effective services to them.

Adjah (2005)⁸ conducted a study to identify the information needs, information sources, information seeking behaviour and barriers to access to information of 122 female adult literacy learners in Accra, the capital of Ghana. The main information need identified was information to solve day-to-day problems followed by the need to acquire basic conversational skills in English, to communicate with customers they meet in their trades and professions. The information needs of the subjects demand a new concept of service and practice. Literacy agents must team up with librarians to take care of the special information needs of women enrolled in literacy classes.

Cooper and Urquhart (2005)⁹ investigated the information needs and information seeking behaviours of home-care workers and clients receiving home care. The qualitative research methods included participant observation in the homes of clients (n = 7), over a period of 18 months, in a city in the UK, complemented by in-depth interviews of home-care staff. (n = 47). Home-care staff perceived requests for information on a variety of topics as an indivisible part of their caring role. Clients asked for more information than they had in the past, and home-care workers were

expected to respond to a wide variety of enquiries about health, welfare, leisure and domestic concerns. Clients trusted their advice as much as they might have trusted members of the family. Home-care workers from an agency used a variety of resources at the agency office to help them, such as leaflets on welfare benefits, and health conditions. Few had used NHS Direct, and library use (by one third of home-care workers) was generally associated with course work or training. Some family members and home-care staff used self-help groups, but the research found that family members were sometimes reticent to ask advice on sensitive issues in self-help groups. Home-care workers learnt from each other and shared experience. Libraries and information services need to target provision of formal information carefully, as it advice and counsel that is required in the home-care setting.

Eiayan and Younis (2005)¹⁰ in their study reviewed developments of the industrial sector in Jordan. It aims at suggesting a service model that would fit in the industrialists' needs and requirements in the context of a specialized information center. It investigated characteristics, information needs, interests, sources and purposes, libraries used and services required by 250 industrialists (164 i.e. 65.6% responded) in 65 medium-sized factories in Zarqa Governorate (ZG). Findings revealed that the industrial sector in ZG is male-dominant with 86.6%. Most respondents (85.3%) are young, specialized in industry; engineering, economics, and business. Their information interests are in: Internet, Science & Technology, Marketing, Information Technology, Business and Administration. They use internet, printed and electronic information sources in academic and public libraries for decision-making, problem solving, developments in industry, administration, consultancy, imports/exports, and marketing purposes. Lack of time, library location, and poor collections are prime hindrances obstructing use of libraries. Adequate specialized

collections, loan of library materials, internet, photocopying, and advanced information services are the most needed from the suggested Library and Information Service.

Korjonen-Close (2005)¹¹ studied the information needs and behaviour of clinical researchers in UK and Europe. As part of the strategy to set up a new information service, including a physical Resource Centre, the analysis of information needs of clinical research professionals involved with clinical research and development in the UK and Europe was required. It also aimed to identify differences in requirements between the various roles of professionals and establishes what information resources are currently used. Two hundred and ninety members responded to the online survey of 20 questions. Members expressed a lack of information in their particular professional area, and lack the skills to retrieve and appraise information. The results of the survey are discussed in more detail, giving indications of what the information service should collect, what types of materials should be provided to members and what services should be offered. These were developed from the results of the needs analysis and submitted to management for approval. Issues of concern, such as financial constraint and staff constraints are also discussed. There is an opportunity to build a unique collection of clinical research material, which will promote the institute not only to members, but also to the wider health sector. Members stated that the most of the medical libraries don't provide what they need.

Moster and Ocholla (2005)¹² investigated the information needs and information seeking behaviour of parliamentarians in South Africa. Parliamentarians have an incessant need for timely, authoritative, and current information because of the enormous social responsibility bestowed on them by the electorates or society. A strong information accessibility that empowers them to fulfill this responsibility effectively is therefore very significant. Essentially and traditionally, parliamentary libraries are expected to provide legislators with most of the information they need. The study

aimed at determining the information sources, service and systems used in South Africa by the parliamentarians, and also to investigate the role of the parliamentary libraries in the information provision process. A survey was conducted by use of questionnaires targeting all parliamentarians in South Africa and a response rate of 23% (167) was received. This study has revealed that parliamentary libraries are underutilized because parliamentarians use other equally competing information sources largely accessed through internet. Further, South Africa has enormous information sources and services that legislators can access and exploit and the use of electronic source of information is growing rapidly, almost reaching the level of use of print sources. Unexpectedly, oral sources of information are used less. Parliamentary libraries have a potential to offer a variety of services to parliamentarians, yet they are not well-utilized, perhaps because of reasons such as poor marketing and innovative information services. Wilson's model on information seeking has been extended by a new model proposing and explaining information seeking strategies popular to parliamentarians in South Africa.

Stefano, et al (2005)¹³ attempted to ascertain the printed information needs of organic farmers in KwaZulu-natal. Four resource-poor farmer groups in KwaZulu-natal participated in a study to explore how to meet their need for Printed Agricultural Information Materials (PAIMs) to promote small-scale commercial organic farming. Participatory rural appraisal methods (focus groups, semi-structured questions, information tabulation, voting, ranking, sorting and observation) were used to determine how farmers access innovative agricultural information, their preferences for information channels, the effect of literacy and language on their use of printed information, and the provision of relevant printed information materials. Participants evaluated five PAIMs. The findings showed that there is a critical need for appropriately repackaged PAIMs to reach farmers. Intermediaries, on whom farmers rely for external (mostly oral) information, could expose farmers to alternative

information channels and/or sources. Materials written in the farmers' first language, isiZulu, were preferred, while at least one functionally literate farmer was a member of each of the participating groups, thereby facilitating group literacy. The study concluded that printed materials on their own are not sufficient to meet small-scale farmers' new information needs, and recommended a collaborative, action research approach to ensure that farmers are involved in developing their agricultural knowledge and information systems.

Banda, et al (2004)¹⁴ carried out a study to determine the information needs of small-scale business community at Chisokone market in the city of Kitwe in Zambia. The study sought to establish among other things the unique information needs of the business community; the type of business carried out, the different service providers within the city of Kitwe, the problems faced by small-scale business community in seeking information and the demographic characteristics of the community. The research design employed is the survey method. Questionnaires were used to collect data from the population. From a sample of 250 respondents, 209 completed questionnaires giving a response rate of 83.6%. The results of the study showed that the most of the information needs related to marketing, source of supplies, management skills, and credit/loan facilities. Lack of access to information was cited as the major problem facing small-scale businesses at Chisokone market in Kitwe.

Harrison, et al (2004)¹⁵ in their study focused the information requirements of social workers. Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data. Results suggest that the social workers were information poor in terms of access to information source. Lack of internet access was significant barrier to obtain information. Combining the results achieved from two or more methods is a process known as triangulation. By continuous cross checking, a deeper insight is acquired and the quality of the findings is improved. As this study was exploratory in nature, both

quantitative and qualitative methodological tools were employed. It was clear from the focus groups that information gathering is essential at the point of assessment of the client. This requires liaison with a range of people and services including general practitioners, occupational therapists, and physiotherapists, medical and nursing staff, the external organizations such as housing organizations and the police. The social work team gathers information from the client about their condition and social circumstances prior to hospitalization.

Njoku (2004)¹⁶ investigated the information needs and information seeking behaviour of fishermen in Lagos State, Nigeria. The survey was carried out in the rural fishing communities of the state. Using questionnaires supported with interviews, personal observation and examination of relevant records, data were collected from 500 fishermen in different fishing communities in the state. The simple percentage was used to analyse the data. The study examined information needs, sources and information seeking behaviour as well as problems encountered by the fishermen in a bid to obtain information. Results also showed that the information needs of fishermen in Lagos State are mostly occupation directed. Their chief sources of information include colleagues, friends, neighbours and relatives. Results also showed that the fishermen in Lagos State are mostly illiterate, married. And male adults in their middle ages require information about credit facilities. This is the most important information need of the fishermen. Lack of awareness about where to obtain information on modern fishing technology is the most common problem of the fishermen in their attempt to seek information. This shows that there is acute shortage of information and fisheries extension officers in the field of information dissemination. It was concluded that the means and sources of information seeking found in fishermen in Lagos State are no longer adequate to meet advanced technology in the field and this can be detrimental to

the profession. Suggestions that would facilitate information seeking and use among fishermen in Lagos state were given.

Chaplan and Hertenstein (2002)¹⁷ studied the information needs of local union officials in a Midwestern state. Questionnaires were distributed to determine the information needs of local union officials and how they go about satisfying those needs. It was hypothesized that the institutional roles (such as negotiator, grievance handler, administrator, organizer, educator and political worker) or individual role (such as educational certification, personal problem solving, writing and communication) inhabited by these officials would determine the information sources used, whether formal (such as libraries, union research departments, union publications, and databases) or informal (such as personal networks, telephone enquiries and local office files). It was also hypothesised that training in how to do research would affect the number and diversity of information source used. Partial support was found for the hypothesis. While many of the union rules showed similar rates of needs, there were enough differences to support the hypothesis that union role determines information needs. The data also showed that the type of information needs helps predict the information sources used. Finally, training has a positive effect on the number of information sources used and on the number of formal sources used. Comparisons to previous research are made and suggestions for further research are presented.

Ikoja-Odongo (2002)¹⁸ conducted a study to understand the information needs of women in the informal sector of Uganda. The informal sector is a fast growing economic sector in Uganda for development and employment of most small business entrepreneurs including women in the country. This paper presents insight into the information needs and information seeking strategies of the Ugandan women in the informal sector. Their business characteristics and sources, and channels they use to access information as well as constraints they face in information seeking, have been

explored and represented. Qualitative research design and methods that involved the use of critical incidence technique were largely used. One hundred and seventeen women from five districts were sampled through snowballing and disproportionate sampling techniques. This paper recommends actions to be taken to make business information available to women. More research on women related information is advocated.

Uqboma (2002)¹⁹ studied the environmental information provision of oil-producing communities in Nigeria. On the basis of questionnaires, interviews and observations, examined the environmental information needs of 290 community members (farmers, fishermen, salaried workers, students and business people) in the four communities which host oil-flow stations in the oil-producing Niger-Delta areas of Nigeria. Findings revealed that the greatest environmental information needs are in the area of gas flaring (100%), health (98.1%), and land (96.9%). The main information sources used by respondents in meeting their information needs are town criers and community leaders (82.7%), radio (77.7%) and personal networking (7.19%). Libraries were rarely used as a source of information as only 1.2% of respondents indicated the use of libraries as a source of information for meeting their needs.

A study was conducted by **Edoka (2001)**²⁰ to identify the sort of information about Taiwan required by appropriate Nigerian business executives. It also examined how Nigerian business executives obtain the required information about Taiwan and assessed the overall availability of such information. In addition the project provided a framework for effective provision and dissemination of appropriate information about Taiwan to Nigerian entrepreneurs in need of such information. Data was collected using questionnaire, supplemented by interview and observation. 43 businessmen of the six urban areas of Nigeria who had business links with Taiwan formed the target population. 22 out of 43 (51.2%) responded and the response rate is reasonably

representative and is helpful in demonstrating trends. The analysis of data collected showed the items of goods imported and exported and the nature of contact of business people. Twenty (90%) of the respondents stated that they had made business trips to Taiwan and nine (40.9%) of them made business trips to Taiwan twice or more in a year. Telephone ranked highest of the other forms of business communication with Taiwan. Fourteen of the respondents (63.6%) utilized telephone to make business contacts with Taiwan followed by Fax (40.9%), telex and letter (36.4% each). As far as the information needs are concerned, fourteen (63.4%) of the respondents required information on currency regulations. Eleven (50%) indicated that they required information on export/import regulations and another 11 (50%) required information on business partners. The main sources of information were found to be Taiwanese business partners, fellow Nigerian businessmen and Nigerian business centres. The study also revealed the non-receipt of timely information for business and the high cost of information.

Ikoja-Odongo (2001)²¹ investigated the information needs of informal working class economic sector in Uganda. The study explored the uses to which the sector puts the information it acquires, as well as the role and impact of information in the growth and development of the sector. The investigator uses a survey research technique, with the data collected largely through focus group discussions, interviewing of key informants and organisations, and observation through voice recording and photography. Preliminary results showed a variety of information needs, uses, effects, channels, languages, sources, and constraints. Concludes that the study has been extremely valuable for testing research instruments, and that the results indicate a need to simplify the packaging of information and to improvise on its delivery.

Marcella and Baxter (1999)²² conducted a study to identify the information needs and information seeking behaviour of a national sample of the United Kingdom

population. The objectives of the survey were to gather quantitative and qualitative data on the citizenship information needs and information seeking behaviour of the general public in UK. It was also aimed at in analyzing the data in order to identify broad patterns emerging and to determine which variable impacted upon response. Data were collected through questionnaires were received out of a sample of 2830 persons covering all regions of the United Kingdom. The findings of the study showed that interpersonal communication was preferred by the largest number of respondents. Legal information had created much difficulty in terms of access and use. Only a small proportion of respondents expressed a preference for using computer to seek information at present, but the majority (74.9%) indicated that they would use computer if these were available. 72.6% of the respondents were of the view that public libraries were the appropriate location and 79.2% believed that access to accurate and unbiased information was very important for exercising their rights as citizens.

2.3. Studies conducted in India

A number of studies were conducted in India on the information requirements of different category of people for different purposes. Out of the 24 studies selected, 14 of them are related with Panchayat Raj Institutions and local governance. The other studies deal with the information needs of students, professionals, villagers etc.

Prinja et al (2007)²³ have conducted a study in Rohtak district of Haryana to ascertain the nature and extend of consultation done by Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANM) with panchayat members and to determine the factors affecting such consultation. 150 panchayat members (50 Sarpanches and 120 panchayat committee members) were selected by simple random sampling from 30 functional health sub centre areas. 30 ANMs were interviewed with the help of semi structured, pre-tested interview schedule. Informal discussions were held separately with ten Primary health Centre Medical Officers. The study revealed that contact by ANM with panchayat

members not being contacted even once during last six months. The Sarpanches are contacted more frequently than Panches and contacts with female Sarpanches are more gainfully used by the ANM. The ANMs contacted Sarpanches primarily for disseminating information on special health campaigns. The awareness among panchayat members regarding their responsibilities and the 73rd constitutional amendment is very low (33%). Lack of capacity to undertake development work and illiteracy are found to be the reasons for not involving them in the planning process. The study recommended increased contact by ANM with panchayat members on a regular basis to increase their information literacy in health sector. Capacity of panchayat members for undertaking a meaningful role in delivery of health services should be built with suitable training. Sharing of information will keep the panchayat members informed regarding the problems and activities of the institutions of health.

Giri, Biswanath and Jeevan, V K (2006)²⁴ have carried out a study on eradicating untested preconceptions in rural society through scientific information support system. The study highlights the need of an integrated information support system for rural society, which not only eradicate the primitive barbaric practices but also build a science conscious society. The best way to provide information support for the rural society is the formation of integrated rural information support system taking panchayat as the main hub of the system. Six steps used for the extension of scientific information are: 1) identification of the area 2) identification of the information centres 3) training of mediators 4) content and structure of the awareness programme 5) information dissemination strategy and 6) monitoring and evaluation. The 3,358 Grama Panchayats of West Bengal has been classified in to three groups as follows: a) Less informed Grama Panchayats b) Moderately informed Panchayats and c) Well informed Panchayats. The working of the information support system would be distributed as per the need of the different villages within Grama Panchayats.

The study concludes that sound information base is the prerequisite of knowledge building. Increase in information dissemination will definitely increase the awareness of the people. This awareness is very much essential to eradicate the harmful practices from the society and for the development of rural sector.

Seth and Parida (2006)²⁵ conducted a study focusing on the information needs and information seeking behaviour of the scheduled caste/scheduled tribe students/researchers/ faculties in Orissa with special reference to higher education and a need for networking of these educational institutions without any preconceived expectations or hypothesis. The primary goal of the study was to find out the information needs of the SC/ST students, researchers and faculties in autonomous Colleges and Universities of Orissa. Primary data for the study was through personal interviews. 500 questionnaires were distributed randomly among SC/ST students, researchers and faculties of 20 institutions consisting of eight Universities and 12 autonomous Colleges in eleven districts of Orissa. 324 questionnaires were received which include 256 students, 44 researchers and 24 faculty members. The analysis of data showed that newspaper, radio and magazines are the more useful information sources among the different media to satisfy social needs of the respondents. The sources of information for the family were found to be members as the highest ranked sources of news followed by neighbours, television and newspaper. Majority of respondents visited occasionally the chambers of commerce, professional trade associations, public relation officer and Government Department to collect information other than their libraries. It is observed that educational (22.4%) and sociological (21.73%) information are more used by the SC and ST communities. They are less interested to technological information. The highly used information sources are textbooks followed by reference materials and popular magazines. As far as the

assessment of information was concerned, 23.43% of respondents stated that it was easy to use. 22.13% and 20% of the respondents respectively were of the opinion that the information was easy to understand and relevant.

Sujatha et al (2006)²⁶ in their study found that a variety of information is required to manage and develop the fisheries sector. The printed as well digital information must be available and accessible, and potential users must know its contents. Access to fisheries information is provided in different forms such as directories, abstracts and databases that can be searched on-line or are available on CD-ROMS. The main objective of this study is to propose a model for an information system exclusively for the fisheries sector. The proposed Indian National Fisheries Information System (INFIS) can be organized as a multi-tier coordinating system capable of meeting the objectives. Fisheries institutions and resources are scattered all along the coastline of the country. Fisheries sector problems should reach the various laboratories and the solutions from the laboratories should go back to the fishermen and fish-farming communities. The information generated will aid disseminating research results and management measures known to fishing and fish farming communities to strengthen collaboration and co-operation between the research, extension and information communities. The system should be organized according to a multi-stage decentralized plan with the help of participatory and cooperating sponsors well coordinated and integrated into the system. The authors suggest that a national Information system in fisheries has to be developed which could play a vital role by prompt supply of all the available information to scientists who need it in their research and development work. The study also recommends that a close co-operation of the scientists in the fisheries sector and information professionals have to be developed for the identification of information resources and organization and management of information resources.

Gireesan (2005)²⁷ undertook a study on the people's participation in rural governance. The broad objectives of the study were to analyse the degree of people's participation in rural governance and to suggest measures to improve people's participation in rural governance. For this study purpose six Grama Panchayats in Pipraich block of Gorakhpur district of Uttar Pradesh were selected. Administering structured interview schedules to the adult population from the selected Grama Panchayats collected primary data. Interviews with the Pradhan/Upa-Pradhan/members and the Secretary of the Grama Panchayath were also conducted. The study indicated that there is a significant difference between the male and female respondents regarding their participation in rural governance. The differences are more explicit in the aspects like involvement in Gram Sabha meeting and participation in the activities organized by the Gram Panchayath. It is observed that the frequency of literate population is significantly high in aspects like involvement in the Gram Sabha meetings and participation in the activities organized by the Gram Panchayath. This indicates that literacy is a crucial factor in evaluating participation of the population rural governance. Strengthening of Panchayath Raj Institutions (PRIs) in society ensures rural development, which in turn ensures overall growth, and development of the country. People's participation in rural governance enables growth with equity along with ensuring the development of democratic process.

Johnson et al (2005)²⁸ in their study aims to inform the scholarship by reflecting on the interface between local government and local people in two Indian states – Andhra Pradesh (A.P) and Madhya Pradesh(M.P), Data were collected through interviews, schedule through household surveys of 680 house hold respondents of elected representatives, (consisting of Sarpanch, Upa Sarpanch and all ward members) non-elected officials and villagers, selected on the basis of caste, class and gender in twelve villages in six districts of A.P. and M.P. during the period of June, 2001 and June,2002.

The study observed that the rates of attendance and participation in Grama Sabha were substantially higher in A.P. than in M.P. The finding from the village studies appear to support the assertion that governance at the local level can be positively influenced by a state government which is willing and able to undermine the autonomy of local government. It was found that the M.P. government failed to challenge the well-entrenched authority of village Sarpanches that resulted in the marginalization of the Grama Sabha. The majority of development funds are channeled through the national schemes that come with fixed targets and budget lines. These schemes are top-down and rigid, giving the panchayats limited scope for planning. The powers of panchayats are limited to choosing the projects under the schemes.

Singh and Singh (2005)²⁹ in their paper highlighted the main features of capacity building programme initiated for the representatives of Panchayat Raj Institutions in Punjab. The methodology, contents of the training programmes and issues that emerged from training workshops held from 1995 to 2005 are discussed in detail. At present there are 12,443-gram panchayats, 140 Panchayath Samiti and 17 Zila Parishads, constituting 12,443 Sarpanches, 75, 727 elected representatives. About 400 training workshops, conferences and symposia have already been completed. More than 24,000 participants comprising Panches, Sarpanches, Zila Samiti members and Zila Parishad members including women and members of the Scheduled Casts, actively participated in these workshops and demanded that such programmes should be held at regular intervals, so that they could acquire more information and knowledge in respect of their functioning. Issues raised and discussed in various workshops related to devolution of powers to the Panchayat Raj Institutions, development of the social sector particularly, health sanitation, drinking water, education, agriculture, crop diversification and allied activities. Female feticide and social welfare programs have been discussed in the paper. The role of panchayats in these matters and the necessity of awareness of the elected representations is the focus of the study.

Deviprasad and Haranath (2004)³⁰ conducted a study to understand, in a comparative perspective, the various dynamics involved in the participation of dalits and women in Panchayat Raj Institutions in Andhra Pradesh. The specific objectives of the investigation were the following:

1. Study the comparative profile of the sample including that of women and dalit members in the Gram Panchayats.
2. Examine the role of reservation in promoting the participation of women and dalits in Gram Panchayats.
3. Identify the disabling and enabling factors for the entry and functioning of women and dalits in Panchayats.
4. Study the functioning of Gram Panchayat, Gram Sabha and the relationship among the stakeholders of Panchayath System.
5. Identify training needs of the Panchayath members including that of women and dalit members.

Out of the 21 Gram Panchayats of Padmanabham mandal of Visakhapatnam district, nine Gram Panchayats was selected by using a purposive sampling method. The total sample of 125 respondents consist of nine Sarpanches, 48 Ward Members and 68 Villagers. Besides five Officials, (one Mandal Development Officer and four Village Secretaries) were also interviewed and their responses were also taken into consideration while analysing the data.

The study showed that more than half of the Sarpanches and ward members were illiterate. The dalit and women Panchayat Members mentioned a number of difficulties at the time of entering politics. The significant difficulties include money, threats from dominant caste, apprehension regarding ability to perform, lack of

education and lack of knowledge about the system. Illiteracy, ignorance about roles, rules and procedures, lack of role in decision-making lack of information about meetings etc. were the disabling factors in the performance of the respondents. Minimum educational qualification was (10th Class). Understanding about Panchayath Raj rules/duties, previous political experience, Information flow, Community support etc., were found to be the enabling factors affecting the functioning of dalit and women panchayat members.

Ghosh and Uptal Kumar (2003)³¹ in their study tried to describe the leadership quality of the rural panchayat leaders in Tripura as they play important role in shaping the process of rural development. For this purpose an index for the leadership of the members in different panchayat was constructed. The leadership level of a panchayat is estimated on the basis of perception and observation, as there is no standard method of doing so. Nine major factors like education, occupation, monthly family income, age, sex, land ownership, caste, political influence and the nature of contact with general public were considered. Two blocks each were selected respectively from West and South Tripura districts as they are similar in terms of their socio-economic conditions; Dukli and Mizra from west and Agartala and Udaipur from south Tripura districts. Three villages were selected at random from each block. There were different occupational groups in different panchayats. Data on performance by way of socio-economic programs in different panchayat were collected. The results showed that the panchayats of Dukli block performed better than other panchayats. In Mirza block, the group undertook more schemes per member than the two other blocks. The same is the case with social issues and programs undertaken by the panchayats across the two blocks. It is also observed that the development has taken on the quality of the leadership, their perception on the local problems. These observations are dependent on their level of education, occupation and their meeting frequently with the general

public. It is also observed that the existing members must be given education and training, to involve them more, understand the issues better and adopt appropriate policies.

Kumaresan and Alosia Chitra (2003)³² undertook an investigation regarding the information requirements of village people of Tamil Nadu with the following objectives.

- 1) to study and evaluate existing resources and information services provided at the villages;
- 2) to ascertain the resources of information available in the villages;
- 3) to appraise the attitudes and the opinions of the people on the concept of information centre for their villages;
- 4) to examine if people have easy access to information of their choice and if not the problems faced thereby and
- 5) to introduce the concept of Rural Information Centre for the rural areas of Tamil Nadu.

Twenty villages from the various districts of Tamil Nadu were selected by simple random sampling method. The data was collected from the president of the panchayat and a few villagers of each village. The questionnaire was used to collect data by explaining the questions to the respondents and obtaining the response. Television and radio were found to be the most popular media of getting information (31% each) followed by newspapers (19%) telecom facility (13%) and information centres (6%). Majority of the villagers (31.37%) need information regarding their career or job opportunities followed by agriculture related information, (27.45%) entertainment, (21.57%) information related to news and general knowledge (19.61%). 70% of the respondents answered in affirmation regarding the requirement of Rural Information Centre and 30% of them felt that the already existing system is more than

sufficient. The most important barrier to the villagers in making their representation is the procedure and preparing a memorandum explaining their grievances. In this regard an agency that can help them in preparing such memorandum is very much needed by the villagers.

Manjula, et al (2002)³³ has conducted a study at the University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore to understand the characteristics of farmwomen, to know the source of information to participate, the extent of usefulness and to ascertain the reasons for participation and to obtain suggestions of farmwomen to make Krishi mela more effective. Data was collected personally through the structured interview schedule from the farmwomen who participated in Krishi Mela. The study found that majority of respondents was middle aged, education up to primary school, married with marginal land holding. The major occupation was agriculture and majority of them having more than five members in their family. A good majority of farm women had undergone training at Farmers Training Centre, Bangalore. The study revealed that 43.3% of farm women listened to radio, 33.33% and 8.33% view T.V. and read newspapers respectively. 51.7% of farm women participate in Krishi Mela through the source of information from Assistant Agricultural officer and 38.3% got information through Extension Guide who was grassroots level worker of the University. 1% of women got information through mandal panchayat members and Secretary. 75% and 18.3% of farm women perceived that Krishi Mela is 'useful' and 'more useful' respectively to get information on subsidiary occupation such a dairy, poultry, sheep rearing, piggery and mushroom cultivation which are leisure time activities and fetch income immediately. Only 6.7% of them perceived it as 'less useful'. Majority of farm women expressed that they have participated in Krishi Mela to learn more about the use of fodder crops and silage. The study concluded that farmwomen participate in

Krishi Mela to get first hand information about recent developments in the field of agriculture and allied activities.

A study by **Roopashri Sinha et al. (2002)**³⁴ attempted to understand how women see their role in Panchayat and village development under Panchayath Raj Institutions (PRIs) in Uttar Pradesh. The objective is to analyse the status of PRIs in two villages i.e. Madaripur and Majhauriya in Lucknow district. The status of health providing agencies in the two villages, women's participation along with their experiences and their requirements are analysed.

The study observed that women are part of the PRIs in Principle and in terms of elected leaders at the state level as well as in the Lucknow block. Madaripur Gram Panchayat included three villages with 11 Grama Panchayat Members. The Pradhan was a male and the Upa Pradhan was a women. The villagers of Madaripur are not happy with the decision about the selection of beneficiaries of various schemes because they are not consulted in this process. Majhauriya Gram Panchayath has two villages with 11 Gram Panchayath members where the Pradhan and Upa Pradhan are females. The Gram Sabha meetings are held under the husband's direction. Most of the women members of Gram Panchayath are not aware of the criteria for different schemes, Grama Sabha meetings and their role in various committees. The Pradhan's husband and Gram Panchayat Development Officer take important decisions and give orders for implementation of scheme. The study concluded that training should be given to women to enable them to become economically independent and that the new PRIs provide an institutional mechanism for people's participation at the local level.

Sekhar (2002)³⁵ conducted a study about a training experiment for Gram Panchayath members in Karnataka. Main objectives of the study were (1) to train the Gram Panchayath (GP) members on issues related to reproductive health, family planning, population and environment, nutrition, hygiene and sanitation, education and

equity; (2) to demonstrate the efficacy of the methodology of training panchayat members through training a number of local level volunteers by a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO); and (3) to develop training materials like modules and video documentaries, appropriate for panchayat members/local leaders. The Institute of Social and Economic Change (ISEC) carried out a pilot training project for gram panchayat members in four out of the six taluks in Chitradurga district of Karnataka.

The study observed that in the training of the trainers, the volunteers were sufficiently equipped to carry out the prescribed task of training gram panchayat members by using the materials prepared. Most of the trainers felt that it was useful not only in training panchayat members but also for their own personality development. Most of the panchayat members actively participated in the training programme, shared their experiences regarding training and designed action plans for their respective villages. It was found that their knowledge and awareness of the Panchayath Raj setup has improved. The women panchayat members expressed more interest and willingness to participate in the training. Majority of the panchayat members felt that the modules were very useful and informative. It is concluded that it is essential for the government officials to actively involve in the training programme. The panchayat members should be trained immediately after they are elected in to office and a refresher-training programme should be organized every year. The state government should provide the infrastructure and other resources for training programme at the grassroots level.

Sethy (2002)³⁶ argues that participatory development communication and effective facilitation by development agencies is required for better participation of the weaker sections of the society. Non Governmental Developmental Organisations, User Groups, People's Organizations and the Community Based Organisations known for their popular approach, skilled personnel and other resources could be involved in and

other resources could be involved in the process of awareness building, need identification, articulation and implementation of the development programmes at the grass roots level. Close coordination is very much required among the development agencies and the Panchayath Raj Institutions (PRIs) for successful development intervention. It is concluded that the preparation of the participatory database is the first and most essential step towards initiating Decentralised Multi level planning and development.

The PRIs could use the fund allocated for creating a reliable and simple database. For this purpose, organising Grama Sabhas regularly with a definite motive to involve the rural poor, especially the disadvantaged, and women is a great challenge for the development agencies and the PRIs. Study shows the poor understanding of elected representatives regarding linkages among three tiers. About 30% of women feel themselves as responsible persons. The perception of male representatives, it was found that they take their women counterparts seriously and even try to help them to take part in deliberations. Man's attitudes towards women's entry into politics and chairmanship have started changing. These women representatives need to be imparted systematic training to lead and understand their responsibilities. Education to bring about social and political awareness should be given to both men and women.

The investigation by **Sharma (2002)**³⁷ examined whether women have acquired recognition as men, as partner with dignity, whether the bottlenecks impeding their participation in the development process through political organizations have been overcome and whether the bureaucracy is as responsive and responsible to the issues taken up by women. A sample of forty elected women municipal counselors/corporators was drawn from Delhi Municipal Corporation out of which twenty-five counselors responded. A total of 150 women party organization leaders

from Indian National Congress & Bharathiya Janatha Party were also selected for the study. Data were collected through questionnaire.

The study showed that 76% of the respondents were of the view that personality as a factor matter in politics and women who are modern, urban and maintain liberal values get early entry and attention in politics. 80% of the respondents reported that they had to discharge looking after the daily household works and also the duties as counselors. 80% of the respondents were aware of the problems of their constituency but 65% of them were unable to provide concrete solutions to these problems. Political background of the family played a major role in the political socialization, mobilization and efficacy of women counselors in discharging their functions effectively. Imparting training in electoral and administrative dimensions of participation is suggested for effective participation of women in their new assignments.

Mahapatra and Panda (2001)³⁸ made an attempt to study the information needs of the working journalists in Orissa. The study was undertaken with the following objectives: to discover the principal information needs and resources utilized for obtaining the desired information by the working journalists in Orissa; to identify the areas of specialization of the working journalists; to determine the frequency of information needed for their journal writings; and to determine the mode of dissemination preferred by there. The study was designed to cover 490 journalists working in 40 newspaper organizations in the state. A questionnaire was structured for this purpose and mailed to them. 226 responses were received by the investigations. To discover the principal information need and resources utilised, the respondents were asked to rate the particular information needed under three parameters, namely, utmost significant, moderately significant and less significant. Keeping in view the possible information needs, the entire subject gamut was categorized under 20 broad groups. It was found that, working journalists seem to have considered those subjects

as of utmost significance which are primarily related to their professional work and image. It has been observed that a majority of Journalists in the state are generalists rather than specialists. Majority of journalists needed information almost daily so as to make their feature writings and news reporting more lively. Further the journalists preferred to build up personal libraries to satisfy the day to day information needs.

Chakrabarti and Basu (1999)³⁹ studied the behavioural aspect of the information needs and communication factors of Totos, which is a sub-Himalayan tribal community living on a small hill area called Totopara of Jalpaijuri District in west Bengal. The total number of Totos in the Totopara was 1039 of which, the number of adult Totos was 450 in 205 families. The household survey was adopted for data collection. The analysis and interpretation of data revealed that the highest percentage of the population required information on various types of grants of government and non-government organizations. Collection of natural products, agricultural products, day labour etc., was other significant areas on which information was sought. Information on market price of Bamboo, Areca nuts and Ginger were ranked equally. It was also revealed that respondents required information on edible herbs, vegetables, pepper, firewood, honey and other forest resources. A well planned network of community information system has been suggested by the investigator in order to enrich the quality of life of Totos.

Sugunavathy (1999)⁴⁰ has studied the information needs of Subject Matter Specialists in agricultural extension service. The district level authorities of agriculture in Andhra Pradesh were called Subject Matter Specialists. They provide information to the extension workers of agriculture through training programmes. The objectives of the study were to identify the information needs and sources of information of the subject matter specialists in order to design and develop suitable information system. Questionnaires were used to collect data. Three districts from three regions of Andhra

Pradesh were selected purposively of which one was the district where Andhra Pradesh Agricultural University is located. 68 subject matter specialists responded out of 105 questionnaires sent. A three-point scale was used for scoring. Frequencies and percentages were used to analyse the data.

The respondents expressed great need of information on improved seed and varieties followed by soil management, soil and water conservation, manure and fertilizers etc., Maturity index studies of important crops was the last in the ranked items. Subject matter specialists sought information for the training programmes, for solving problems caused by them and for up-dating their knowledge. It has been found that the information needed or the sources used were to solve their day to day problems.

Neelameghan (1997)⁴¹ conducted a study on the information needs of urban planning using a case study from a developing country. The purpose of the study was to point out different approaches to urban planning and to identify the information and data required for effective urban planning, the sources and output reports. Data derived from a survey of the use of information by fifty staff of a national planning agency in a developing country forms the basis of this study. The response of users showed that the purpose of information sought was in the order, planning (41.1%), problem solving (27.1%), keeping updated (16.9%) and general awareness (11.9%). The same survey indicated sectoral information needs of four departments of the planning agency. 17.5% of the staff of Economic research Department used agricultural information. Other major type of information used was population (11.1%) and natural resources (11.1%). 26.1% of the staff of the Department of Population Studies used demographic information. 11.5% of the staff of the Department of Urban Plans used information regarding maps and plans. As far as the information sources used, the frequency of use of other institutions, survey and onsite observation methods for data collection by the

four departments was found to be relatively higher than the use of document sources. Individuals at work in field surveys were also used extensively as source of information. Unpublished materials were found to be more demanded than published materials. Human sources of information-potential experts, consultants and peer groups were also useful.

Neeraja Verma (1997)⁴² conducted a study to assess the information needs of bank employees of public sector banks in greater Gwalior. It was carried out with the objectives of studying the information services and system at national and regional levels, to investigate into what extent they are using the services, to assess the information needs, the sources used and the channels of communication. Questionnaires were distributed to 400 bank employees by using stratified random sampling among three categories of employees, Supervising staff, Clerical staff and Subordinate staff. 300 employees responded. Structured as well as unstructured interview technique was also used to obtain data from higher cadre management. The findings of the study showed that the most popular source among supervising and clerical staff were bank circulars, reports, and books of banker's association, newspapers, and audio-visual media. Journals were also considered as important sources. The above two categories were guided by the seniors about sources to be consulted. Majority of employees were not satisfied with the information system to meet their needs.

Nicholas and Martin (1997)⁴³ studied the information needs of journalists. The study was aimed at finding out the characteristics of information need, subject, nature, function, viewpoint, authority, quantity, quality place of origin etc., and the obstacles that stand in the way of people meeting their information needs. Semi-structured, one hour long taped information needs interviews were conducted with 50 journalists selected from the national news papers: The Independent, The Sunday

Times and The Guardian. The chief characteristics of the information need of journalists were the sheer size of their information requirements; authority and currency of information; and the speed with which they need information. Journalists needed information for fact checking, current awareness, investigation and to obtain a context. They received much of their information through telephone or personal contacts. The major obstacles in meeting information needs were lack of time, information overload and lack of training.

A study was undertaken by **Reddy and Karisiddappa (1997)**⁴⁴ to ascertain the interaction of professionals in the field of disabilities. The information users in the field of disabilities are highly heterogeneous in nature and include parents, trainers, various types of professionals, researchers, sociologists, administrators and policy makers. The objectives of the study were to ascertain the types of communication channels used; to know latest information in the field of interest; to identify the sources used in performing specific research activities; and to know the duration of time spent in browsing/regarding literature while performing research activities. Questionnaire method supplemented by interviews was the techniques used for data collection. The questionnaire was sent to 300 professionals working in the field of which feedback from 160 respondents was received. Since the population was too large to be covered in a single study, the sample size was restricted to 160, comprising of 130 professionals working in the field of mental retardation and 30 professionals engaged in other disabilities. The professionals without required basic qualifications were not included in the study. The results of the study indicated that the sample group placed greater reliance on informal channels rather than formal channels. Journals were found to be in the first rank order of sources used for research activities and projects. Books are the highly used sources for designing training packages and in offering therapeutic / diagnostic services.

Singh (1997)⁴⁵ in his study examines the level of impact of political empowerment, study the extent of participation in sole performance, to understand the role of women Panchayath Raj representatives in Karnal district of Haryana with emphasis on the factors that contributed to their assuming these posts. The study also highlights the changes in the perception of male counter-part regarding women folk in the study area. There are 1184 women members and 119 women Sarpanches in 369 Gram Panchayats of Karnal District. Numbers of Panchayat Samities in the district are six and women head two of the Samities. Number of women member in Panchayath Samities and Karnal Zilla Parishad were 52 and 6 respectively. The study observed that more than 46 percent of the respondents were from age group of 18-35 years and around 15 percent were from senior age groupie 56 years and above. About 49% were from higher casts and about 25% from lower casters. About 25% women representatives were illiterate. Almost all the women representatives are first time entrants in the PRIs and they were house wives coming from all sections of the society. Most of the women representatives have no clear conception of their role as members and chairpersons, because they are unable to understand the complexities of politics and official procedures.

Veeranjaneyulu (1997)⁴⁶ conducted a survey on the information needs of farmers in Nellore District (Andhra Pradesh). The objectives of the study were to find out various types of information sources of farmers regarding seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and marketing; to know various ways through which the farmers seek their information; to analyse the role of radio and television informing the latest developments to farmers and to assess the preference regarding newspapers and farm magazines published in Telugu. The data were collected through questionnaires by interview methods and also from District Hand Books and Agricultural Abstracts available from Chief Planning Officer, Nellore. 150 educated farmers were selected

from Nellore District , 50 samples each from the 3 Revenue Divisions namely, Nellore, Kavali, and Gudur. The results of the survey showed that the majority of the farmers are getting agricultural information regarding seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and marketing mainly from friends, relatives and government agencies. It has been found that the respondents are reading only two newspapers (Eenadu and Andhra Jyothi) for agricultural information. Half of the respondents were not able to listen AIR because of financial problems. Television programmes were not accessible to the farmers because of non-availability of television.

2.4. Studies Conducted in Kerala

The number of studies conducted in Kerala about the Panchayat Raj Institutions is comparatively less. However some investigators have studied the socio-economic and political aspects decentralised planning and local governance. The following five studies are found to be more relevant.

Ahamed and Swapna (2006)⁴⁷ conducted a study to understand the practicality and rationale of Indegenous Technical Knowledge (ITK) in farming. The study was aimed to collect and document, in a participatory way, the indigenous knowledge on pest management in various farm production systems. It also focused to measure the strength and rationality of the compiled indigenous practices to explain their science and technology content. Palakkad district, the rice granary of Kerala was selected for the study purpose. The representative areas under the study were selected using a four stage sampling method. Out of the thirteen development blocks of the district, one block each was selected to one agro-eco zone. The selected blocks were Alathur, Kuzhalmannam, Nenmara, Kollengode and Agali. Six panchayats each from the first four and three panchayats from Agali block were selected based on the criterion- 'agricultural predominance'. The third stage unit comprised of Agricultural Officer

and one Agricultural Assistant of each of the selected panchayat. This purposive sampling gave a group of 54 extensionists. Through judgment sampling, with the help of extensions of the respective panchayats, five Key Informant Farmers (KIF's) were selected from five farm production systems. Besides the 54 extensionists, 30 veterinary scientists from various fields were selected to offer the evaluative perception and scientific rationality of the ITK items. The representatives from all the subsystem identified viz; Farmer Sub System (FSS), Extension Sub System (ESS) and Research Sub System (RSS) were included as the respondents for the study. Primary data were collected from the respondents of FSS using modified, shortest participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)/Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) – the type of approaches which have proven their worth in participatory development all over the world. A combination of Focused Group Discussions, Brainstorming and Semi Structured Group Interviews were followed in this approach. The data collected from FSS regarding the ITK item in Rice based cropping System were assessed with both ESS and RSS. Thus a table showing highly ranked ITK items was prepared based on both its evaluative perception and scientific rationality. It has been found in the present study that indigenous knowledge plays a vital role in the local level planning and it must be collected and stored to control pests and diseases.

Thomas (2006)⁴⁸ Jas conducted a survey of all plan projects undertaken by Beneficiary Committees during the period of 1997-98 to 2004-05 in Porathissery and Nattika Panchayaths of Thrissur district, Kerala State. The main objective of the survey was to make an evaluation of the performance of Beneficiary Committees in Kerala, to analyse the problems, if any faced by the Beneficiary Committee in the implementation of Plan Projects and offer some suggestions for improvement. The survey revealed that the Nattika Grama Panchayat could complete 55 projects out of 96 projects while Porathissery Grama Panchayath could complete 11 projects out of 72.

Like wise, while Nattika did not have any dropped projects, Porathissery has 10 such projects. The presence of comparatively large number of spilled over projects in both Panchayats throw light on the fundamental problems and issues faced by Beneficiary Committees as well as the Panchayath Members.

The large number of spilled over projects in these two Panchayats and the factors, which led to the omission of plan projects undertaken by Porathissery Panchayat were mainly due to the lack of the technically skilled people and non-availability of right information at right time. The study of dropped projects also revealed the poor vision and the inability of planners to foresee things accurately. The viability of the project was not studied properly. The only consideration behind the choice of such projects was the self-interest of the elected member and his eagerness to obtain funds for his ward. The speedy completion of projects in certain localities where the respective elected members were very active underlines the need for responsible leadership in Panchayats. Political differences and personal conflicts among the elected members of the Panchayat committee also had a significant role in the poor performance. Capacity building measures should be strengthened among the elected members and the people should be made aware about the importance of the values of co-operation, sharing and mutual trust which leads to the development of social capital.

John and Jose Chathukulam (2002)⁴⁹ conducted a study of a village panchayat in Kottayam District with an objective of assessing the institutional revolution that Kerala has witnessed in recent years. Its implications for social capital formation and the building up of a vibrant civil society capable of playing a corrective and supportive role in the functioning of local bodies have also been examined. Social capital means features of social organization such as networks, norms, and trust that facilitate coordination and co-operation for mutual benefit. Social capital fosters reciprocity, facilitates information flows for mutual benefit and creates trust. The trust

and cooperation produced social capital assumes significance particularly in local level development.

The study was based on empirical data collected from a village panchayat (Chempu Grama Panchayat) located in the district of Kottayam in Kerala. Methods of data collection employed in the study include questionnaire, focus group discussions and interviews with key informants. The study concludes that the associational life in Kerala has received an unprecedented growth due to participatory planning. The ward development committee is becoming more powerful and the ability of the panchayat member to carry the committee with him/her is crucial for smooth conduct of Grama Sabha. The phenomenal rise of micro-level institutions in Kerala is due to the initiative taken by the Grama Panchayat Members. Civil society stands for the capacity of a society to organise itself without being organized by the state. We need a strong and efficient institution of panchayat which survives without state patronage. The Grama Panchayat members being the managers of local level planning should be equipped with relevant information and knowledge for timely decision-making.

A local level participatory field survey initiated by the Department of Fisheries, Kerala has been explained by **Gosh (2001)**.⁵⁰ The Panchayat Fisheries survey (Panfish survey) was a state wise fishery resource survey aimed at gathering data and information on 'anything and everything' related to the fisheries at the local levels. The main objective of the survey was to collect fisheries data and to compile it in a systematic way to prepare Panchayath Fishery Resource Data Book called 'PANFISH BOOK'. Panfish books are designed as authentic Fisheries Resource Data Books which can be used for multifarious references by the planners, administrators, students, scientists and the general public. The survey was conducted under the supervision of the team of technical staff with the active support and participation of the elected representatives of the local people. 991 Grama Panchayath, 53 Municipalities and 5

corporations in the State were covered under the survey. The local level Panfish books are compiled at district levels as District Panfish Books. There are further compiled at State level to form the Master Panfish Book.

The survey revealed that the existing fisheries information which was collected 35 year back has to be updated. With the publication of Panfish books, Kerala has become pioneer in the collection, storage and dissemination of Panchayath level fisheries data in the country. All the Panchayats in Kerala would be preparing local and short and long term Panfish plans in the ensuing 10th Five Year Plan which would enable the department of Fisheries to formulate comprehensive ‘Master Plan’ for the overall development of fisheries in the state.

Teekaram Meena and Rajasekharan (2000)⁵¹ identify the information needs of policy makers, local government functionaries including the elected representatives. Others who need information are the public, journalists, teachers and opinion makers of the society. It was proposed to establish a digital local government information centre (DLGIC) at Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA). It has been acting as the nodal agency for the Panchayath Raj and Urban Local Governance in the Kerala with twin objectives.

1. To act as a catalyst for formulating policy discussions at the governmental level and,
2. To engage in research, training, information dissemination, consultancy etc., to enhance the performance of the local bodies in Kerala.

The services that can be provided by DLGIC include article alert service on decentralization, information package to policy makers, online newspaper clipping service and electronic publication of documents. The proposed information system provides free flow of relevant information from top to grass root level which empowers the local functionaries. Provision of right information at right time expedites decision

making in all levels of governance. KILA can revolutionise the process of participatory planning and local governance by a strong information support.

2.5. Conclusion

A vast amount of literature and documentation exists on user studies in general and on information requirements of and use pattern of information by various kinds of users in particular. Decentralised governance and development has also attracted the attention of a number of researchers in India. A considerable number of studies were also undertaken by investigators on the decentralized planning in Kerala. Most of the studies are related to the Socio-political and economic aspects. Some of them are related to the issue of Panchayat and their performance in delivery of services. Certain micro level studies have been undertaken by individuals to examine the outcome in development and people's participation. The studies which reveal the factors responsible for creating and sustaining social capital are very rare.

There is no comprehensive study available which deals with decentralised governance and its ability to promote development with reference to effectiveness, equity and sustainability in the delivery of services at the grassroots level. The capacity building among elected representatives of Grama Panchayat in Kerala and the awareness of people plays an important role in the effective local governance. The transparency in the development process and the effective formulation and implementation of programmes need various kinds of information at different levels. The availability of information is crucial for decision making and the Grama Panchayat members require diverse kind of information in their day-to-day activities. The training programmes imparted to the Panchayat functionaries, the handbooks/manuals and the line departments are the main sources of information to them.

As decentralised governance is an important trend development and elected representatives are responsible for decision making, efficient information support

system for the LSGIs in Kerala is essential. It is not only necessary to know the information requirements of Grama Panchayat Members of Kerala in the context of decentralised planning but also to examine the existing information sources and information support system. Such a study has not been conducted to assess the information needs, information sources, and barriers to communication, the capacity of Grama Panchayat Members to imbibe information and to examine the information infrastructure of decentralized planning in Kerala. Therefore, there is an imperative need for an in-depth study focusing on these areas.

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3.1. Introduction

The main aim of the present study is to understand the information needs and information use pattern of the members of the Grama Panchayats in Kerala. In decentralised and participatory planning the elected representatives play key role in planning and development. In the centralised planning the planners have the expertise and the information is provided by the established information system. They also have the facilities to access information sources irrespective of time and distance. The library and information centre at the head quarters of the State Planning Board and the Information and Communication Technology facilities provided information support system at the state level. However, in the local level planning, the planning processes are decentralised and the planners require diverse kind of information at all levels of planning. But they do not have proper sources of information to depend upon.

In the present study, data regarding the information needs, the sources of information, the use pattern of information and the awareness of information of the elected representatives of Grama Panchayats are collected and analysed. The results of the study would help to design a development information system at the state level which will provide easy access to information at local level. It is in this context the present study is conducted. The aim and objectives of the study, hypotheses of the study, research design and data analysis techniques are discussed in this chapter.

3.2. Research Objectives

The main aim of the present study is to examine the information needs and information use pattern of the members of the Grama Panchayats in Kerala in the context of decentralised planning. In order to fulfill this aim, the following specific objectives are identified:

1. To identify the information needs of Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala in the context of decentralised planning.
2. To understand the preferences in the use of information sources by the Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala.
3. To compare the information use pattern of the Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala.
4. To identify the channels of communication among the Grama Panchayat Members of Kerala.
5. To study the use of indigenous knowledge by the Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala.
6. To assess the information base of local level planning and governance in Kerala
7. To suggest measures for improving the information base of local governance and for developing an information system to support Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala.

3.3. Hypotheses

The following are the major hypotheses of the study:

1. The Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala do need various types of information in local level planning and their information needs are not properly met.
2. Interpersonal communication is the main source of information of Grama Panchayat Members and they are not fully satisfied with the existing information sources.
3. The information use pattern of Grama Panchayat Members of the three regions of Kerala is similar. The members are active, participative and dynamic in local governance irrespective of regions

4. The local knowledge has been used extensively in decentralised planning and these have to be collected and properly organised.
5. The lack of awareness of digital information hinders the performance of Grama Panchayat Members and their capability to use web resources has to be strengthened.
6. There is a need of an information system to support local governance as information base of decentralised planning in Kerala is weak and inadequate.

3.4. Research Design

The present study is designed to assess the information needs and information use pattern of the Grama Panchayat Members of Kerala in the context of decentralised planning. The research findings would be helpful in designing an information system that supports local level planning and governance. In order to meet the specific objectives of the study, a comprehensive literature review has been conducted first. A combination of quantitative and qualitative research methodologies has also been employed to collect data from the persons responsible for local level planning.

3.4.1 Methods of Data Collection

The methods used to collect data for the problem under study includes review of related studies and questionnaire surveys of Grama Panchayat Members. Participant observation of Grama Sabhas, Development Seminars and such other meetings and conferences was conducted by the investigator to supplement the data obtained through questionnaires.

3.4.1.1 Review of Related Studies

After conceiving the topic, the investigator started the literature search. The bibliographical details of the documents on the topic of research and related areas were

collected from abstracting journals and databases. Library and Information Science Abstracts (LISA) database was also used as a source of information. “Bibliography of Doctoral Dissertations accepted by Association of Indian Universities (AIU), “Research in Library and Information Science in India: A Bibliography of PhD, M Phil, and MLISc Dissertations” compiled by P. S. G. Kumar, et.al. were the important sources consulted for reference. Literature on user studies, information needs of different category of professionals and the information use pattern of various user groups were studied in detail.

The review of related literature helped the investigator to understand the methodologies used in this study. The literature search also assisted the researcher to properly identify various issues involved in the present study. It is seen that none of the studies covered the particular aspect of the present investigation and hence the topic is of sufficient importance for a detailed research.

3.4.1.2 Questionnaire Survey

Structured questionnaires were prepared and administered to the members of Grama Panchayats selected (Appendix 1). The questionnaire was pre tested by administering it to the members of the Grama Panchayats of the locality of the investigator. Necessary modifications have been made in the questionnaire before the final application. The purpose of the questionnaire was to obtain data from the Panchayat Members regarding their information needs in local level planning, their information use pattern, the information sources, the channels of communications, the barriers in getting information, the requirement of an information system that supports local level planning and the importance of indigenous knowledge in the decentralised planning. The name, address and telephone numbers of the Presidents of the selected Grama Panchayats were collected from the Panchayat Guide 2006. The presidents were contacted over telephone and requested their co-operation. The number of members of

the Grama Panchayats was ascertained from the website of the Local Self Government department¹. The questionnaires to be served to all the members of Grama Panchayats were mailed to the Presidents with a request. Stamped and self addressed envelopes were also enclosed for mailing back the filled questionnaire to the investigator.

The questionnaire consisted of three parts. Part I covered thirteen items to collect general and personal information about the respondent. The name of the Grama Panchayat, the status of the member, previous occupation, age, gender marital status, the category, educational qualification, socio-political affiliation etc., were the major items covered in this part. Part II consisted of thirty items. It was intended to collect information about the information needs, the purpose of information, the availability of information, the information base of decentralised planning, the significance of local knowledge etc. It was also intended to get the responses regarding the awareness of information of the members. The awareness of the members regarding the efficiency of communication methods, information sources, and the application of information technology in local governance was also sought in this part.

Part III consists of three sections. Section A has eight items to collect information about the preferences of the information needs, information sources, channels of communications, and the barriers in the communication. Section B has seven items to get information regarding the usefulness of local knowledge, formal education, training programmes, information sources supplied, the government order and circular and the role of library and information centers in local level planning. Section C has seven questions. The first item in the section is intended to know the response of the members regarding the information sources, in each development sectors in decentralised planning, six types of information sources are given against thirteen development sectors. The information sources that provide the required information in each sector can be analysed on the basis of the preferences given by the

respondent. The second item is related with the use pattern of the information sources by the respondents. Three options were given against each type of communication media. The mass media consisting of printed, electronic and the sources like institutions and experts are included in this category of information sources. The remaining item of this section except the last one are intended for the development of the information support system for decentralised planning in Kerala. The necessity and nature of information base of local level planning has also been examined. The last item has been included to get open responses of the members regarding the strengthening of the information base of the decentralised planning and the ways by which knowledge can be devolved to grassroots level along with the devolution of power.

3.4.1.3. Participant Observation of Meeting and Conferences

The investigator also attended several meetings, conferences and local meetings such as Grama Sabhas, development seminars, Panchayath meetings etc. to critically observe the involvement of Grama Panchayat Members. These helped the researcher to understand the awareness of the respondents in local level planning.

3.4.2. Research Sample

Multi-stage sampling was employed for the selection of the sample. In this method, sample is selected in various stages but only the last unit is studied. It reduces the size of the overall sampling frame and makes the study practicable in terms of cost and time. In order to use this method successfully and efficiently, normally the following procedure is adopted:

- a) The whole of the universe is divided into smaller convenient areas or regions. While doing so attempt is made to see that each region is approximately equal in size and similar in characteristics.

- b) In the division of the whole universe into convenient homogenous regions, certain primary areas may be selected from each region at random or through random sampling method. Then from each primary sample area, certain groups are selected as in the first stage. One unit is selected from each group of the units through random sampling method. The beauty of this method is that it has an element of random sampling as well as of stratified sampling. If the procedure could be followed correctly and judiciously, the result shall be quite attributable and greater representation shall be achieved.²

The universe of the present study consists of 16139 elected members of 999 Gram Panchayaths of Kerala. The fourteen districts of Kerala State have been grouped in to three, namely southern, central and northern. In the first stage, Block Panchayats were selected from each region using the random table. Eleven Block Panchayats from among 46 Block Panchayats of southern region, 16 Block Panchayats from among 64 Block Panchayats of central region and 13 Block Panchayats from among 42 Block Panchayats of northern region were selected as sample. From each Block Panchayats selected, one Grama Panchayat each was selected through random sampling method. Thus, in the second stage, eleven Gram Panchayats, one each from eleven Block Panchayats of southern region, sixteen Grama Panchayats from sixteen Block Panchayats of central region and thirteen Grama Panchayath from thirteen Block Panchayats of northern region were selected for the study. In the third stage, all the 183 elected members of eleven Grama Panchayats of southern region, 241 elected members of fifteen Grama Panchayats of central region and 223 elected members of fourteen Grama Panchayats of northern region were selected as the sample of the study. The list of Grama Panchayats under each Block Panchayat of all the fourteen districts of Kerala was obtained from the Panchayat Guide 2006.³ The serial numbers were assigned to the 46 Block Panchayats of southern region from 1 to 46 and numbers were also allotted to

the Grama Panchayats under each selected Block Panchayat. In the same way serial numbers were also assigned to 64 Block Panchayats in central region and 42 Block Panchayats in northern region. Grama Panchayats under each selected Block Panchayat were also given serial numbers in order to select them using random table.

Thus 647 members of forty Grama Panchayats (4 per cent) in forty Block Panchayats of three regions of Kerala State constitute the sample of the study and questionnaires were sent to them. It is found that 435 members (67.2 per cent) from 32 out of 40 Grama Panchayats (80 per cent) responded. The questionnaires of 212 members were not received. The details of sample collected are shown in Table 3.1. It is seen that 107 members (24.60 per cent) from the southern region, 146 members (33.56 per cent) from the central region and 182 members (41.84 per cent) from the northern region responded.

Table 3.1 Region wise distribution of sample

Region	Frequency	Percent
Southern	107	24.60
Central	146	33.56
Northern	182	41.84
Grand Total	435	100

The graphical representation of the sample collected from the three regions of Kerala is given in Figure 3.1

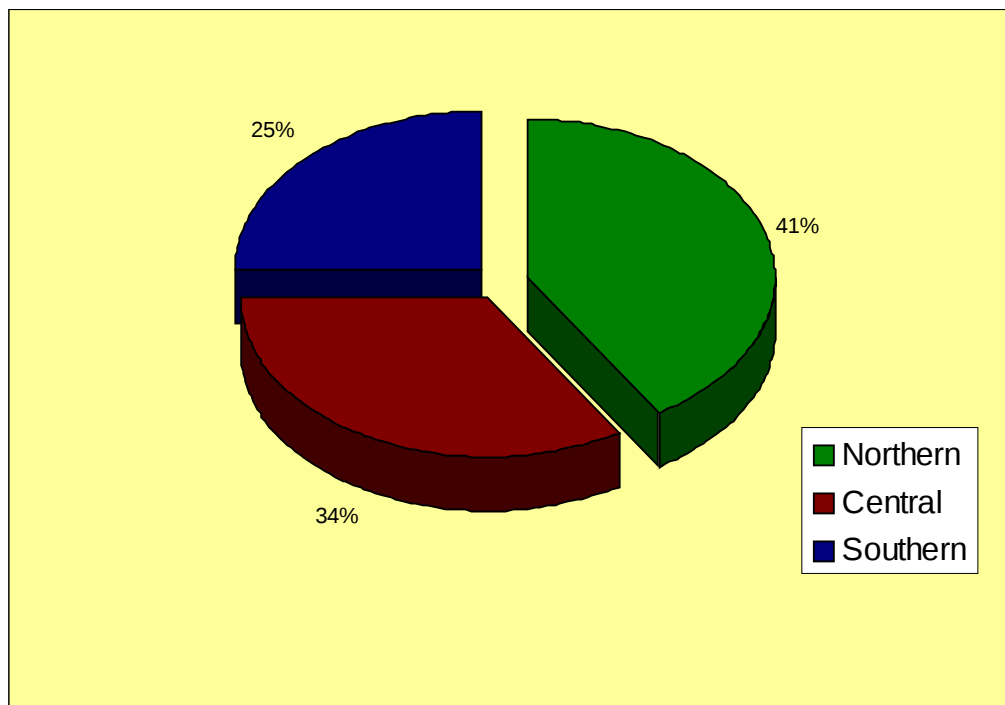


Figure 3.1 Region wise classification of the sample

3.4.3 Data Analysis Techniques

The data collected were analysed and findings were made using statistical methods. Analysis of data collected through the questionnaires, interview and observation using both quantitative and qualitative methods provided the investigator the required results to fulfill the seven research objectives. The objectives and hypotheses of the study already explained earlier demand the use of the following statistical techniques for analysis of data.

3.4.3.1 Percentage Analysis

Simple percentage analysis was used to study the information requirements, the information sources, communication channels and the information support to the local level planning and governance. This was done for the members of Grama Panchayats in different regions and for other relevant sub-samples based on age, gender, educational qualifications, status, social and political affiliation etc.

3.4.3.2. Weighted Mean

In this section rank was assigned to each option according to their preference. A rank of 1 is given to the low preference; a rank of 2 is given to the next higher preference and so on. For finding out a mean rank for each options a weighted mean of the ranks were computed, where weight is the number of individuals associated with that particular rank. The weighted mean is a mean where there is some variation in the relative contribution of individual rank values to the mean. Each rank (R_i) has a weight assigned to it (W_i) where W_i is the frequency of rank R_i . Data ranks with larger frequency (weights) contribute more to the weighted mean and ranks with smaller frequency (weights) contribute less to the weighted mean. The formula for computing mean rank using weighted mean is:

$$\text{Mean Rank} = \frac{\sum W_i R_i}{\sum W_i}$$

Thus a preference index (Mean rank) was computed for each option to all the questions for each region separately and for the data pooled together. A value of high preference index indicates high preference to that option.

3.4.3.3. Chi-Square Test

The Chi-Square (χ^2) is a widely used non-parametric test in statistical analysis and is a measure of actual divergence of the observed and expected frequencies (or values). This can also be used to test the association between two categories. The greater the discrepancy between observed and expected frequencies, the greater is the value of χ^2 . If the calculated value of chi-square is less than the table value, it indicates that the difference between actual and observed frequencies may have arisen due to chance of fluctuations and can be ignored. The quantity χ^2 is defined as

$$\chi^2 = \sum (O-E)^2 / E$$

Where O refers to the observed frequencies and E refers to the expected frequencies.

Steps to determine the value of χ^2 are:

- I. Calculate the expected frequencies
- II. Take the difference between observed and expected frequencies and obtain the square of these differences i.e, obtain the value of $(O-E)^2$.
- III. Divide the quantity $(O-E)^2$ obtained in step (ii) by the expected frequency and obtain the sum over all cells $\sum (O-E)^2 / E$.

This gives the value of χ^2 and is compared with the table value of χ^2 for given degree of freedom at a certain specified level of significance. If the calculated value of χ^2 is more than table value of χ^2 the difference between theory and observation is considered to be significant, i.e, it could not have arisen due to fluctuations of simple sampling. If, on the other hand, the calculated value of χ^2 is less than the table value, the difference between theory and observation is not considered as significant. i.e., it is regarded as due to fluctuations of simple sampling and hence ignored.

For the present study Chi-Square test was employed to test the association between two categories whenever necessary. For this, a two way table of observed frequencies for the two categories was prepared first and then calculates the expected frequencies in each cell and then Chi-Square value corresponding to each cell of the two way table were computed. If the computed value is greater than table value it indicates that there is an association (dependency) between two categories. Otherwise the two categories are independent.

3.4.3.4. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

For studying the usefulness of the information sources a combined score was computed by giving a score of '2' to the response 'very useful', '1' to the response

'useful' and '0' to 'not useful'. A total score for usefulness is thus obtained by adding the score of each source. As there are seven sources, the maximum score that can be attained by an individual is 14. By dividing this into three groups total score can be classified as 'not useful' (having score less than or equal to 4), 'useful' (having score greater than 4 and less than or equal to 10) and 'very useful' (having score greater than 10).

The above combined score for each individual was utilised for comparing the usefulness in different regions, usefulness of information sources having different status, between age groups, among males and females, between education groups, and also among married and unmarried groups. Groups formed by region, status, age and education are compared by using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)⁴ followed by Least Significant Difference (LSD) Test for pair-wise comparison. For comparing male and female and also married and unmarried respondents t- test was used.

3.5. Summary of methodology

The methodology adopted in the present study is summarised in the following chart (Figure 3.1).

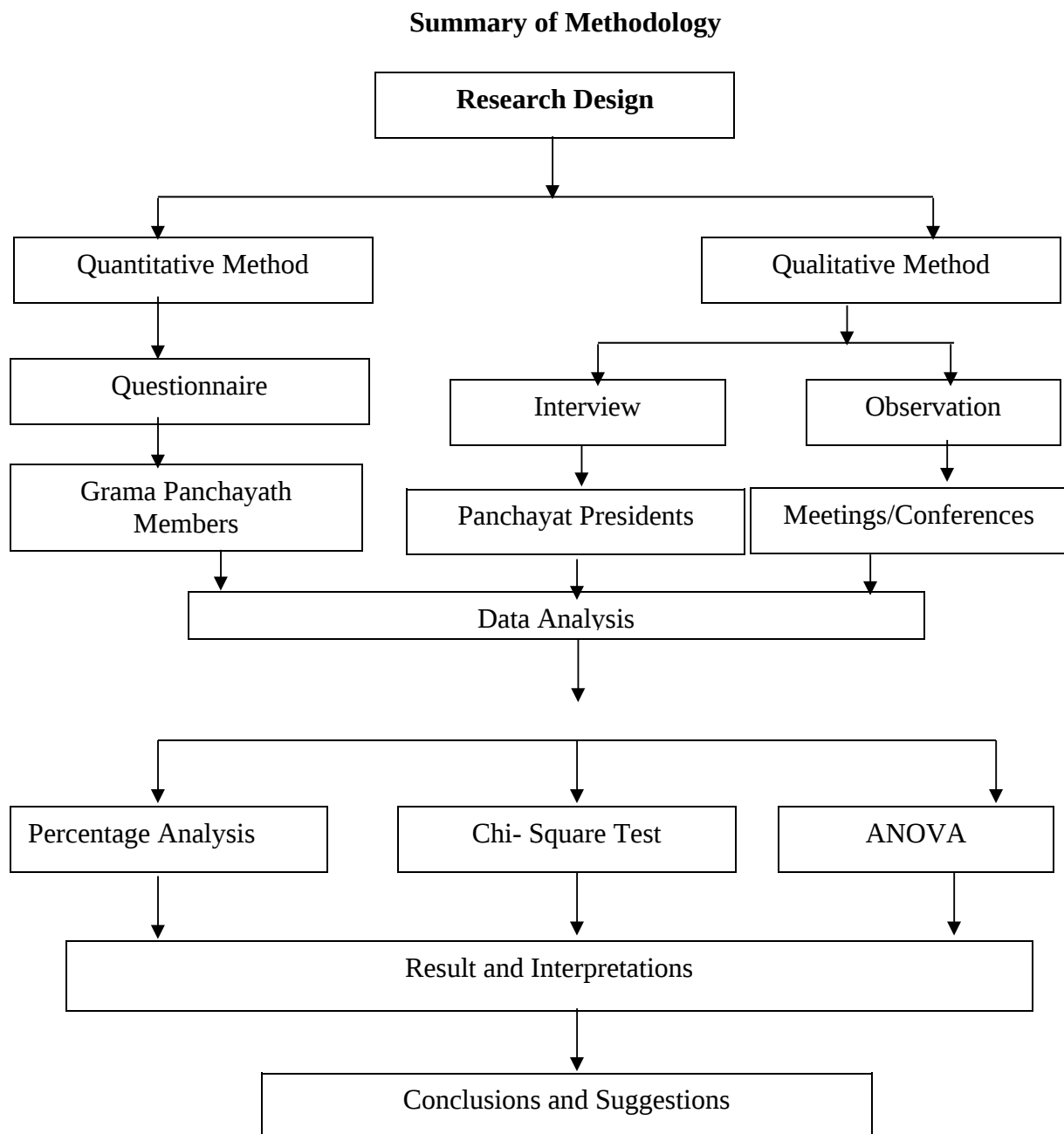


Figure 3.2. Summary of methodology

In this chapter the design of the present study is explained in detail including the tools and procedure of data collection. A brief description of the statistical techniques used is also furnished. The results of data analysis and the interpretations based on the analysis are explained in the next chapter.

References

1. <http://www.kerala.gov.in/government/localself.htm>. Accessed 18th February 2007
2. Panneerselvam, R. (2004) **Research Methodology**. New Delhi, Prentice-Hall of India, pp. 199-200.
3. Jayathilak, A. (2006) **Panchayat Guide**. Department of Panchayats, Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, pp. 44-68.
4. Ahuja, Ram. (2001) **Research Methods**. Jaipur, Rawat Publications, pp. 175-176.

4.1. Introduction

This chapter deals with the details of statistical analysis and interpretation of data collected from the members of the Grama Panchayats (GPs) in Kerala through structured questionnaire to assess their use of information in decentralised planning. The details are organised and presented under the following headings:

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 General Information about Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala
- 4.3 Information Needs of Grama Panchayat Members
- 4.4 Information Sources of Grama Panchayat Members
- 4.5 Communication Channels of Grama Panchayat Members
- 4.6 Local Knowledge in Decentralised Planning
- 4.7 Awareness of Digital Information among Grama Panchayat Members
- 4.8 Information Support to Decentralised Planning in Kerala
- 4.9 Capability Building among Grama Panchayat Members
- 4.10. Conclusion

4.2. General Information about Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala

Data was collected from the members of Grama Panchayats to know their socio-political background. The general information about the respondents include their status, the sectors in which they were engaged earlier, age, gender, marital status, educational qualifications, affiliation to different organizations, social activities, their tenure as Panchayat Members and the political affiliation.

4.2.1. Status of the Members

The respondents of the questionnaire consist of Presidents, Vice-Presidents, Standing Committee Chairmen and Members of the Grama Panchayats under study. The Table 4.1 shows status wise distribution of the respondents in each region. It can be seen that all the Presidents of 32 GPs responded and it is 7.36 per cent of the sample. The Vice-Presidents, Standing Committee Chairmen and Members of Grama Panchayats responded are 26 (65.98 per cent), 51 (11.72 per cent) and 326 (74.94 per cent) respectively. The responses of the members vary from 72.60 percent in central region, 75.70 per cent in the southern region and 76.37 per cent in the northern region.

Table 4.1 Status wise distribution of the Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala

Status	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Presidents	8	7.48	12	8.22	12	6.59	32	7.36
Vice-Presidents	7	6.54	10	6.85	9	4.95	26	5.98
Standing Committee Chairmen	11	10.28	18	12.33	22	12.09	51	11.72
Members	81	75.70	106	72.60	139	76.37	326	74.94
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

The classification of the respondents in the three regions of Kerala based on their status is graphically represented in Figure 4.1.

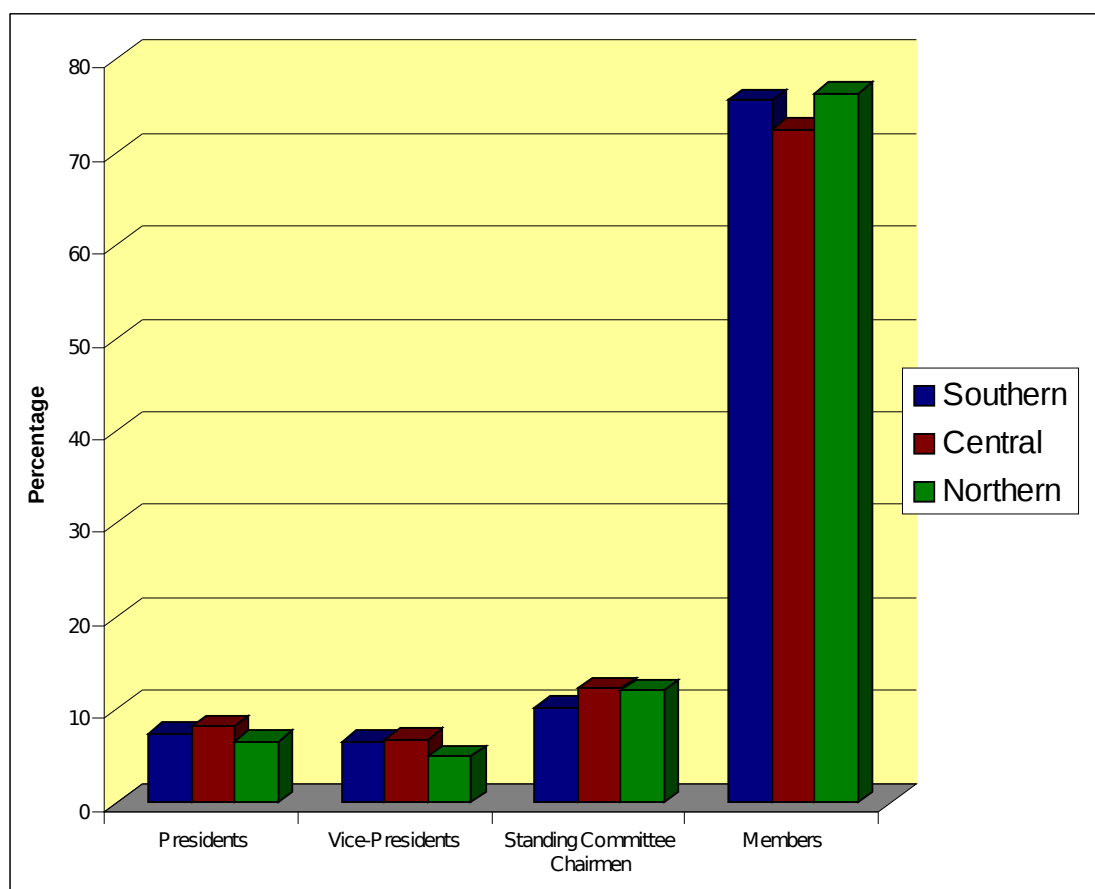


Figure 4.1. Classification of the respondents in each region based on status

4.2.2. Sectors Engaged Earlier

The members of Grama Panchayats are elected by the voters of the ward (constituency). Mainly the political parties decide the candidates for the election. In rare cases, sections of people of the locality propose candidates or certain voluntary organizations propose the candidates. In any case, previous experience of social activities of the candidate is an important factor. Table 4.2 presents the sectors of the respondents in which they were engaged earlier. It can be seen that 69.43 per cent of the members were political activists, 5.52 per cent belong to teachers and 25.06 per cent belong to others. The members belonging to 'others' category are not active political activists but may include workers, traders, agriculturists, social workers, students, retired government staff, house wives etc.

Table 4.2 Distribution of Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala according to the sectors in which they were engaged earlier

Sector	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Political activists	67	62.62	102	69.86	133	73.08	302	69.43
Teachers	9	8.41	2	1.37	13	7.14	24	5.52
Others	31	28.97	42	28.77	36	19.78	109	25.06
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

In the case of number of members who were political activists there is an increase as we move from south to north with 62.62 per cent in southern region, 69.86 per cent in central region and 73.08 per cent in the northern region. The members who were teachers are almost the same in southern and northern regions, 8.41 per cent and 7.14 per cent respectively, whereas in central region it is mere 1.37 per cent. About 29 per cent of the members are from 'Others' category in southern and central Kerala and it is 19.78 per cent in northern region. The distribution of the respondents according to the sectors in which they were engaged earlier is shown in Figure 4.2.

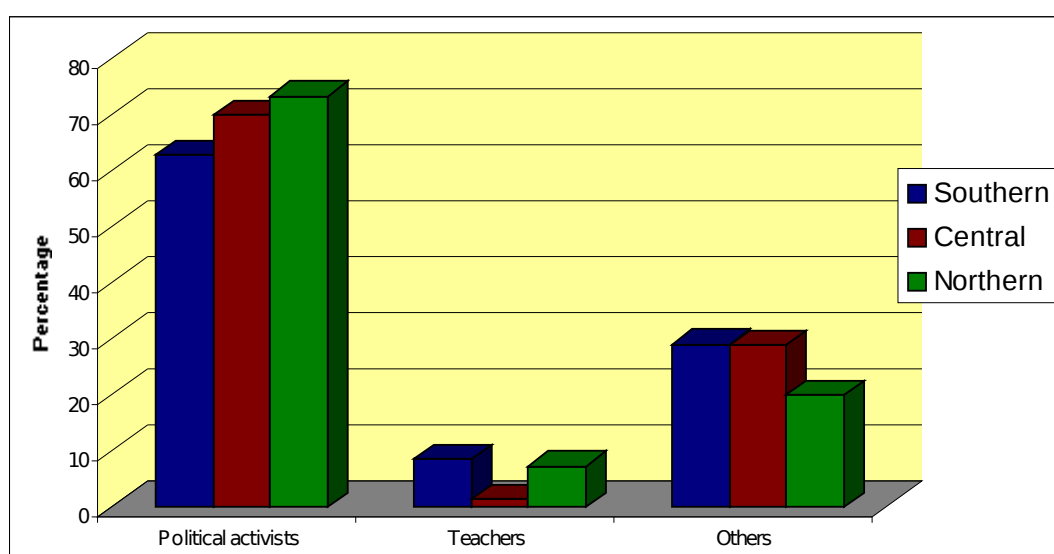


Figure 4.2. Classification of the respondents according to the sectors in which they were engaged earlier

It is found that majority of Grama Panchayat Members have political background and the political parties do make use of the services provided by the members to the people of the locality and thus achieve rapport with people.

4.2.3. Age Range of the Members

The distribution of members according to age groups in different regions is as shown in Table 4.3. It is seen that only 5 per cent each of the respondents are of below the age of 30 and above 59. The members within the age group of 30 - 39 are 34 per cent. And another 37 per cent are within the age group of 40 - 49. There are 18 per cent members in the age group of 50 - 59. The age wise distribution of members is more or less similar in the three regions of Kerala. The analysis shows that about 72 per cent of the elected representatives are within the age group of 30 - 49. This phenomenon of a reduced age profile signals the increasing participation of youth in decentralised governance. It is a positive development and an indicator of greater empowerment.

Table 4. 3 Age wise distribution of Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala

Age group	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Below 30	6	5.61	9	6.16	8	4.40	23	5.29
30 - 39	36	33.64	53	36.30	61	33.52	150	34.48
40 - 49	38	35.51	57	39.04	67	36.81	162	37.24
50 - 59	20	18.69	21	14.38	38	20.88	79	18.16
Above 59	7	6.54	6	4.11	8	4.40	21	4.83
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

It is revealed that majority of the members of Grama Panchayats in Kerala are young, within the age group 30 – 49 and many of them are below the age of 40. Age wise distribution of Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala is shown in Figure 4.3.

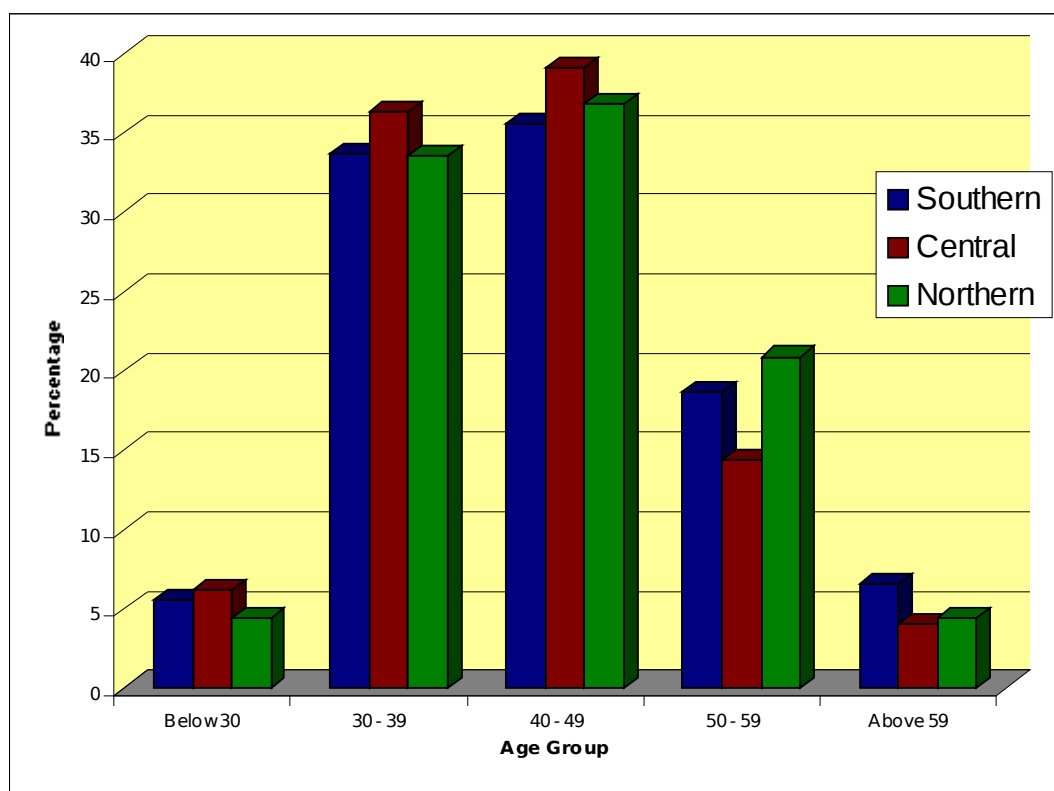


Figure 4.3. Age wise distribution of Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala

4.2.4. Gender of the Members

In Kerala, women enjoy one-third (33.3 per cent) reservation in Local Self Governments. The gender wise distribution of Grama Panchayat Members given in Table 4.4 shows that 61 per cent are male members and 39 per cent are women members. The increase of 6 per cent in women members is justified by greater participation and empowerment of women through social and voluntary mass programmes such as Total Literacy Programme of 1990 and the 'Kudumbashree' programme. Women candidates even contest in general seats against male candidates. The distribution of male members decreases from south (63.55 per cent) to north (58.24 per cent) while the distribution of women elected representatives shows a regular increase from southern region (36 per cent) through central region (38 per cent) to northern region (42 per cent).

Table 4.4 Gender wise distribution of Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala

Gender	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Male	68	63.55	91	62.33	106	58.24	265	60.92
Female	39	36.45	55	37.67	76	41.76	170	39.08
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

It shows greater participation of women in local governance in the northern districts of Kerala. Social reform movements and the spread of modern education have undermined the socio - economic influence of traditional caste hierarchies in Kerala. The greater participation of women in socio-political activities due to the influence of progressive organizations and dominance of left political parties in Malabar region is considered to be the reason for higher percentage of women elected members in northern region of Kerala

It is found that majority of Grama Panchayat Members are men. It is also revealed that the percentage of women elected representatives is more than that of the one-third seats reserved for women. The distribution of male members decreases from south to north while the distribution of women elected representatives shows a regular increase from southern region through central region to northern region .

4.2.5. Marital status of the Members

Analysis of the data regarding the marital status of the respondents shows that about 90 per cent of them are married and a few (10 per cent) are not married (Table 4.5). The percentage of married members shows an increasing from southern region (88 per cent) to northern region (91 per cent). On the other hand, the percentage of unmarried members increases from north (9.34 per cent) to south (12.15 per cent).

Table 4.5 Marital status of the Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala

Marital status	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Married	94	87.85	131	89.73	165	90.66	390	89.66
Not married	13	12.15	15	10.27	17	9.34	45	10.34
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

It is found that large majority of the Grama Panchayat Members are married.

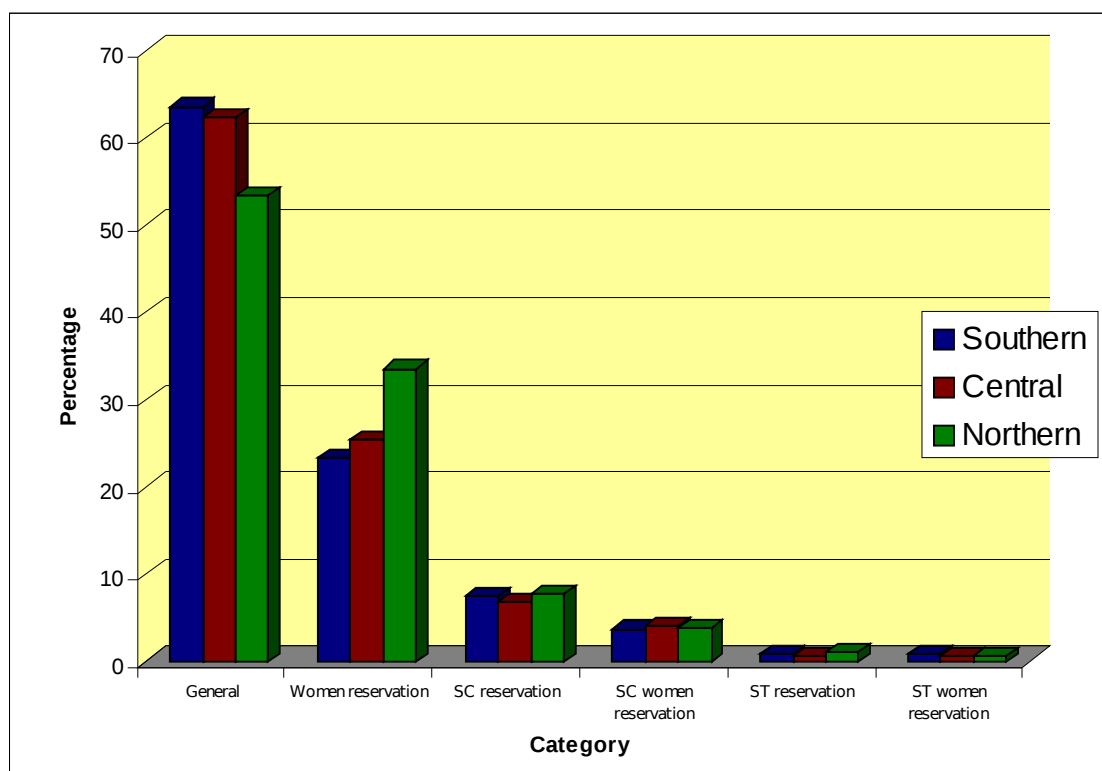
4.2.6. The Category of the Members

The elected representatives consist of six categories as shown in Table 4.6. It shows that 59 per cent of the respondents belong to general category. The total women reservation is 33 percent including scheduled caste (SC) women reservation and scheduled Tribe (ST) women reservation. The total SC reservation is 11 per cent and the total ST reservation is only 1.6 per cent. It has been observed that 39 per cent of the members are women (Table 4.4). However, the total distribution of women members is found to be 33 percent. This comparison shows that 27 women members (6 per cent) have contested and elected from general category. The trends in the distribution of members in the three regions are more or less similar except in the general and women reservation category of northern region. The members in the general category are lowest (53.30 per cent) and the members in the category of women reservation is the highest in the northern region (33.52 per cent).

Table 4.6 Category wise distribution of Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala

Category	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
General	68	63.55	91	62.33	97	53.30	256	58.85
Women reservation	25	23.36	37	25.34	61	33.52	123	28.28
SC reservation	8	7.48	10	6.85	14	7.69	32	7.36
SC women reservation	4	3.74	6	4.11	7	3.85	17	3.91
ST reservation	1	0.93	1	0.68	2	1.10	4	0.92
ST women reservation	1	0.93	1	0.68	1	0.55	3	0.69
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

Graphical representation of the members belonging to different categories of members is shown in Figure 4.4.

**Figure 4.4. Category wise classification of the Grama Panchayat Members**

The category wise distribution of all the elected members of 999 Grama Panchayats in Kerala is given in Table 4.7. There are 56.42 per cent of members in the general category that is very close to the observed data (58.85 percent). The total of women reservation (31.44), SC women reservation (3.50) and ST women reservation (0.40) is 35.35 per cent, which are also very close to the distribution of women members in the sample (33 per cent).

Table 4.7 Category wise distribution of the population of elected members of Grama Panchayats in Kerala

Sl.No	Category	No. of Elected Members	Per cent
1	General	9106	56.42
2	Women Reservation	5075	31.44
3	SC Reservation	1184	7.34
4	SC Women Reservation	566	3.50
5	ST Reservation	144	0.89
6	ST Women Reservation	64	0.40
	Total	16139	100

Source: Panchayat Vikasana Guide 2007, Department of Local Self Government, Government of Kerala, p.8.

The members belonging to SC reservation in the universe (7.34 per cent) and sample (7.36 per cent) selected are the same. All other categories except ST women reservation with a slight variation show the same trends. The similar features of the universe and sample justifies that the sample selected is a highly representative one.

4.2.7. Educational qualification of the Members

The educational background of the members has direct relationship with the extent of their involvement in different activities. The planning and governance

capabilities are the result of formal education and the expertise acquired through socio-political activities. Classification of the respondents based on educational qualifications shows that 21 per cent of the members have studied below SSLC (Table 4.8). This category also includes members who can just read and write only. The members who fall under this category are higher in the northern region (25 per cent) than the central (24 per cent) and southern region (12 per cent). The members with SSLC are 44 per cent in the state level; 50 percent in northern region, 35 percent in central region and 45 per cent in southern region.

Table 4.8 Distribution of the Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala according to educational qualifications

Educational Qualifications	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Below SSLC	13	12.15	35	23.97	45	24.73	93	21.38
SSLC	48	44.86	51	34.93	92	50.55	191	43.91
Higher secondary	17	15.89	29	19.86	20	10.99	66	15.17
Graduation	22	20.56	21	14.38	14	7.69	57	13.10
Post graduation	2	1.87	3	2.05	4	2.20	9	2.07
Professional degree	5	4.67	7	4.79	7	3.85	19	4.37
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

The members who have higher secondary education are more in the central Kerala (19.86 per cent) than the other two regions. There are 20 per cent of graduate elected members in the southern region, 8 per cent in the northern region, 14 per cent in central Kerala and in the state as a whole, it is 13 per cent. It is seen that 2 per cent of the members have postgraduate and 4 per cent have professional degrees. As a whole 79 per cent of the members have secondary education and above and about 20 per cent of them have graduation and higher qualifications. Mere acquiring of educational

qualifications by itself does not lead to excellence, but when it is accompanied with other capacity-building measures, it would enhance self-confidence and skill acquisition in local governance.

The study revealed that majority of the Grama Panchayat Members have secondary education and above.

4.2.8. Affiliation of the Members to Different Organisations

The affiliation of elected members to different organisations is shown in Table 4.9. It is seen that 92 per cent of them belong to political organisations. In the case of other affiliations, members of northern Kerala are more attached to voluntary organisation (22.53 per cent) than the other two regions. The members of southern region are more involved in religious organisation (16.82 per cent). However, the affiliation to trade unions is uniform in the three regions.

Table 4.9 Distribution of Grama Panchayat Members according to their affiliation to different organisations

Organisation	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Political	97	90.65	138	94.52	165	90.66	400	91.95
Voluntary	15	14.02	27	18.49	41	22.53	83	19.08
Religious	18	16.82	15	10.27	18	9.89	51	11.72
Trade Union	21	19.63	28	19.18	37	20.33	86	19.77

It is found that majority of Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala has affiliation with political organisations. They are also associated with voluntary organizations and trade unions. The involvement of members in religious organisations is found high in southern region. Distribution of Grama Panchayat Members according to their affiliation to different organisations is shown in Figure 4.5.

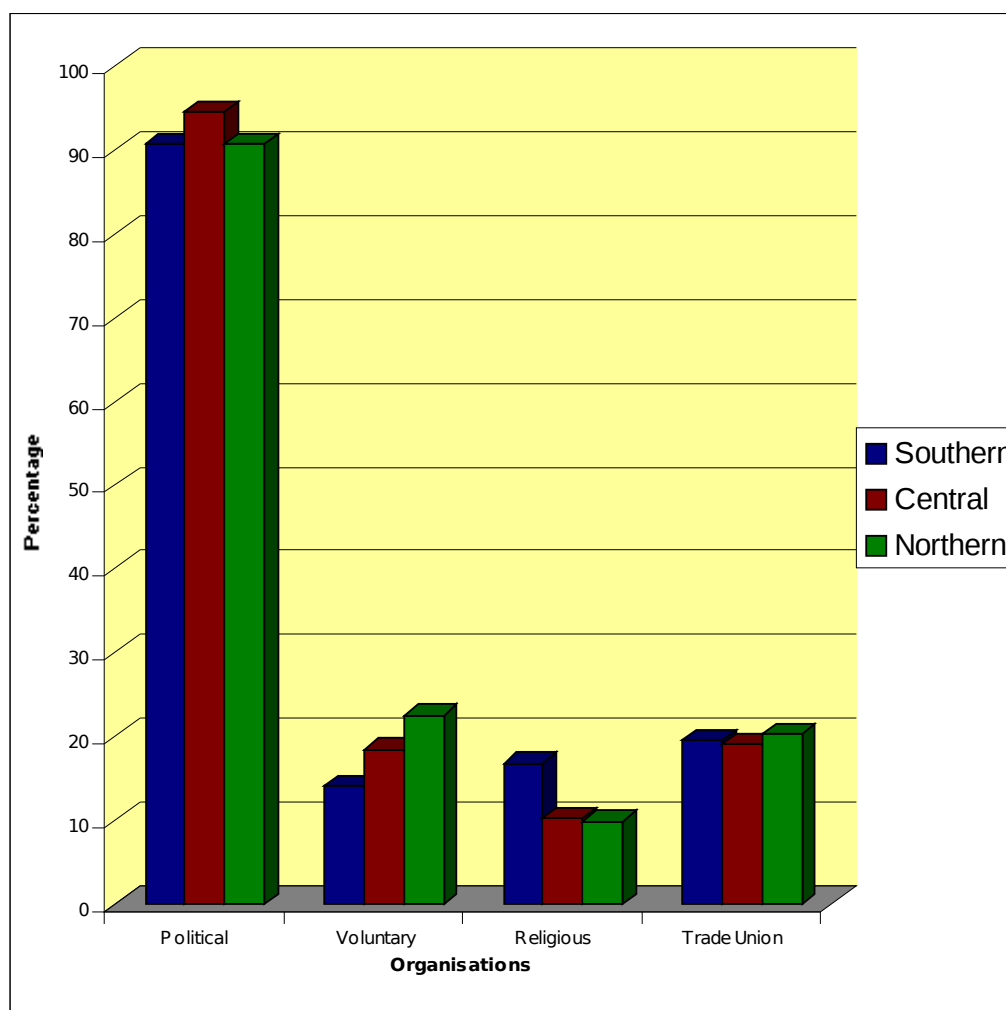


Figure 4.5. Distribution of Grama Panchayat Members according to their affiliation to different organisations

4.2.9. Social Activities of the Members

The study reveals that only 50 per cent of the members participated in the mass programme of Total Literacy campaign carried out in Kerala in 1990, though almost all social, political and voluntary organisation took part in the programme in one way or another. The participation of members in this programme is found to be higher in the northern region (58 per cent) and lowest in southern region (41 per cent). The details are given in the Table 4.10.

Table 4.10 Participation of the Grama Panchayat Members in the Total Literacy Campaign

Response	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Participated	44	41.12	69	47.26	105	57.69	218	50.11
Not Participated	63	58.88	77	52.74	77	42.31	217	49.89
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

They had participated in the Total Literacy Campaign as a part of social service, when they were not Panchayat Members. Later, majority of them contested and elected in the subsequent panchayat elections.

It is found that a considerable number of Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala have previous experience in social service and activities.

It can be seen from the Table 4.11 that 218 members (50 per cent) had served in the Campaign in different roles. It is seen that 13 per cent of participants served as Resource Person (3 per cent) and Master Trainers (10 per cent). The Resource Persons and Master Trainers were responsible for the training programmes. And a good number (43 per cent) of the participants served as instructors who played a vital role in the Campaign by extending voluntary service in teaching the illiterates. Equal number of participants played their role as panchayat/ward conveners (22 per cent) and 'others' (22 per cent). This category of 'others' include leaders of political parties at local level and Panchayat functionaries. A good number of the present Grama Panchayat Members have extended voluntary service in the Total Literacy Campaign and this experience may have benefited them to participate in another mass programme of decentralized planning in Kerala.

Table 4.11 Role played by the Grama Panchayat Members in the Total Literacy Campaign

Role Played	No.	%
Resource person	7	3.21
Master Trainer	21	9.63
Instructor	94	43.12
Panchayat/Ward convener	48	22.02
Others	48	22.02
Grand Total	218	100

It is revealed that many of the present Grama Panchayat Members had served in different capacities in the Total Literacy Campaign of 1990 which establishes the involvement of the members in social activities

The respondents were asked whether they are presently associating with continuing education programme. The summary of the responses is given in Table 4.12. It reveals that 31 per cent of the members are presently associating with continuing education programme under Kerala State Literacy Mission. About 69 per cent of the members are not associating with the programme.

Table 4.12 Association with the continuing education programme by the Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala

Response	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Associating	32	29.91	49	33.56	55	30.22	136	31.26
Not Associating	75	70.09	97	66.44	127	69.78	299	68.74
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

However, it is found that majority of the Members of Grama Panchayat do not associated with the continuing education programme in Kerala.

4.2.10. Tenure of the Members

Ten years have passed after the launching of decentralized planning in Kerala. Therefore, an attempt is made to analyse the duration of the membership of the present members of the Grama Panchayats. The Table.4.13 reveals that only 8 per cent of the members have been elected for the third term. It is seen that 29 per cent of the members have been elected for the second term and 63 per cent of the members are new. The number of members who have been elected for the first time is more in the northern region (66 per cent) while those elected for the second term are higher in the central region. But, Members elected for the third term are more in southern region (8.41 per cent) followed by central region (8.22 per cent) and northern region (6.59 per cent). These Members will have enough knowledge of local level planning through their participation in Peoples Planning Campaign and Kerala Development Programme. As the newly elected are the majority (63.68 %) and they need intensive training, the rate of their requirement of information will be very high. The increase in the number of new comers may be justified by the fact that the dominant political parties had decided to bring the new comers in to the forefront of local governance.

Table 4.13 Distribution of Grama Panchayat Members according to the period of association with local bodies as elected representatives

Period	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Below 2 years	68	63.55	89	60.96	120	65.93	277	63.68
Below 10 years	30	28.04	45	30.82	50	27.47	125	28.74
Above 10 years	9	8.41	12	8.22	12	6.59	33	7.59
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

It is revealed that majority of the Members of Grama Panchayats in Kerala have been elected for the first time. Figure 4.6 shows the distribution of Grama Panchayat

Members according to the period of association with local bodies as elected representatives.

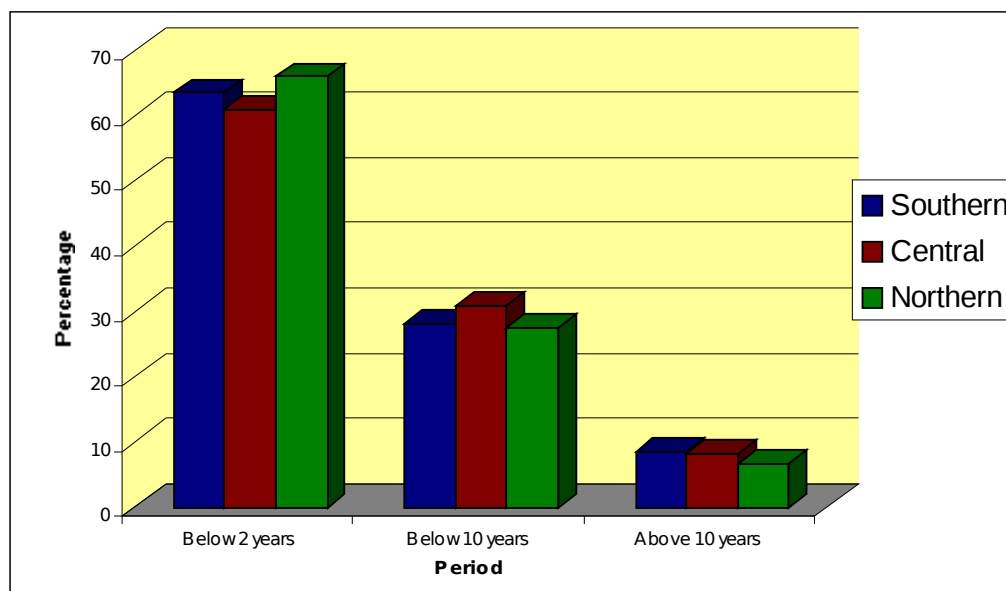


Figure 4.6. Distribution of Grama Panchayat Members according to the period of association with local bodies as elected representatives

4.2.11. Political affiliation of the Members

The analysis of the political background of the elected members reveals certain interesting features. It is well known that the political affiliations in Kerala for the last three decades have been polarized between Left Democratic Front (LDF) led by Communist Party of India (Marxist), CPI (M)) and the United Democratic Front (UDF) led by the Indian National Congress, INC (I). As can be seen from Table 4.14, a good portion (45.29 per cent) of the Grama Panchayat members elected in 2005 belonged to CPI (M) and only a small group (18.35 per cent) belonged to INC (I). LDF, CPI (M) with its allies Communist Party of India (CPI), Janatha Dal, Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP) and Kerala Congress (Joseph) have 57.7 per cent members. Even though other parties like Indian National League (INC) and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) were not the part of LDF, they had local alliance with LDF in 2005 election and thus left front has 63.67 per cent of the members. The UDF consists of INC (I), Indian

Union Muslim League (IUML), Kerala Congress (M), Kerala Congress (B), Communist Marxist Party (CMP) and Revolutionary Socialist Party B (RSP-B) secured 26.6 per cent of members. Bharathiya Janatha Party (BJP) and 'others' have 2.99 per cent and 6.67 per cent members respectively. It reveals that CPI (M) contributes the major share of members in LDF and INC (I) in UDF.

Table 4.14 Distribution of the Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala according to their political affiliation

Political Parties	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
CPI (M)	42	39.25	60	41.10	95	52.20	197	45.29
Congress (I)	23	21.50	37	25.34	22	12.09	82	18.85
CPI	15	14.02	15	10.27	5	2.75	35	8.05
Muslim League	—	—	3	2.05	24	13.19	27	6.21
Janatha Dal	—	—	10	6.85	4	2.20	14	3.22
Kerala Congress (M)	2	1.87	1	0.68	—	—	3	0.69
RSP	1	0.93	1	0.68	—	—	2	0.46
Kerala congress (B)	1	0.93	—	—	—	—	1	0.23
Kerala congress (J)	3	2.80	1	0.68	1	0.55	5	1.15
CMP	1	0.93	—	—	—	—	1	0.23
INL	—	—	—	—	4	2.20	4	0.92
BJP	6	5.61	2	1.37	5	2.75	13	2.99
NCP	5	4.67	6	4.11	11	6.04	22	5.06
Others	8	7.48	10	6.85	11	6.04	29	6.67
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

The region wise distribution of the members shows that CPI (M) has 52.20 per cent members in the northern region, 41.10 per cent in central region and 39.25 per cent in the southern region. On the other hand, INC (I) has 21.50 per cent members in the

southern region, 25.34 per cent in central region and 12.09 per cent in northern region. It reveals that CPI (M) contributes the major share of members in LDF and INC (I) in UDF. The results also reveal that CPI (M) has dominance in the northern districts and INC (I) in the central districts of Kerala. All other parties have below 10 per cent of the members, which range from 0.23 per cent to 8.05 per cent. The sample consists of almost all the political parties in Kerala including independents in the 'others' category (6.67 per cent). Thus, the sample selected is a representative one.

It is found that majority of Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala belong to Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the Left Democratic Front led by CPI (M) has political dominance in majority of the Grama Panchayats of Kerala.

4.3. Information Needs of Grama Panchayat Members

The members of Local Self Government Institutions (LSGs) in Kerala require different kinds of information in their activities of local governance. In the context of decentralised planning, the Grama Panchayat Members should have access to data and information in respect of land and people, natural resources, households, schemes and programmes in each development sector and welfare programmes of central and state governments. They should also have knowledge about beneficiaries of various schemes. In short, the members must be able to understand the importance of information, find out the relevant information, make fruitful use of information and provide information to the public who are in need of it.

4.3.1. Importance of Information in Local Level Planning

Presently the information infrastructure for planning and development in Kerala is highly centralised. It should have been decentralised along with the devolution of powers.

4.3.1.1. Information for Grama Panchayat Members

The members of the selected Grama Panchayats of three regions of Kerala were asked to express their views regarding the significance of information in decentralised planning. The respondents were directed to indicate positive or negative response about the necessity of information in planning activities. The details are given in Table 4.15.

Table 4.15 Opinion of the Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala about the need of information in planning activities

Region	Need any type of information in planning activities?					
	Yes		No		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Southern	102	95.33	5	4.67	107	100
Central	143	97.95	3	20.05	146	100
Northern	175	96.15	7	3.85	182	100
Total	420	96.55	15	3.45	435	100

Positive responses were indicated by large majority of members in all the three regions; 95.33 per cent in southern region, 97.95 per cent in central region and 96.15 per cent in northern region. In the state level, 96.55 per cent of them have agreed that they require information in planning activities. Negligible number of members (3.45 per cent) in all the three regions shows negative responses.

It is found that large majority of Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala require information in planning activities.

4.3.1.2. Information Needs of People

The respondents were asked to indicate whether they were contacted by the people for some information at any time. Large majority (97.24 per cent) of the members responded positively. The region wise breaks up of the positive responses are 97 per cent (southern region), 96 per cent (central region) and 98 per cent (northern region).

Table 4.16 The details of whether the People contacted the Grama Panchayat Members for information

Region	Whether People contacted for information?					
	Yes		No		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Southern	104	97.20	3	2.80	107	100
Central	140	95.89	6	4.11	146	100
Northern	179	98.35	3	1.65	182	100
Total	423	97.24	12	2.76	435	100

It is revealed that majority of the members of Grama Panchayats in Kerala are contacted by the people of the locality to get information.

4.3.1.3. Ability of the Members to provide Information

Large majority (79 per cent) of the members of Grama Panchayats are confident in providing the required information to the public of the locality. The details are given in Table 4.17. It shows that 75.70 per cent of the respondents of southern region, 78 per cent of central region and nearly 82 per cent of northern region claim that they are able to provide information required by the people. Perhaps, this may be a glorified response, as they may not indicate their incapability of providing information to others. However, 21 per cent of the members have admitted that they are unable to provide the required information.

Table 4.17 Ability of the Grama Panchayat Members to provide information to the people

Region	Whether able to provide information required by the people?					
	Yes		No		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Southern	81	75.70	26	24.30	107	100
Central	114	78.08	32	21.92	146	100

Northern	149	81.87	33	18.13	182	100
Total	344	79.08	91	20.92	435	100

Informal discussion with Panchayat Members revealed that people of the locality, mostly belonging to families of Below Poverty Line (BPL) always contact them to get specific information. Therefore, they were compelled to collect information from their colleagues or from the offices concerned. However, 21 per cent of them have expressed negative response showing that they are information poor and are not able to cater to the information needs of the people of the locality.

It is found that majority of the Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala are able to provide information required by the people of the locality and the performance of the members of northern region is better in this regard.

4.3.1.4. Access to information

The summary of responses regarding the availability of information to the members at different phases of decentralised planning is shown in Table 4.18. It shows that 43 per cent of the members expressed positive response and 57 per cent indicated negative response. Majority of the members of all the three regions; 59 per cent each in southern and central regions and 54 percent in northern region have the opinion that information requirements at different phases of planning are not met properly.

Table 4.18 Details regarding the information requirements of Grama Panchayat Members are met

Region	Whether Information requirements at different phases of decentralized planning are met properly?					
	Yes		No		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Southern	44	41.12	63	58.88	107	100
Central	59	40.41	87	59.59	146	100

Northern	84	46.15	98	53.85	182	100
Total	187	42.99	248	57.01	435	100

The study revealed that the information requirements at different phases of decentralised planning are not met properly as indicated by majority of the Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala and more members of central region are of this opinion.

4.3.1.5. Information for Decision-making

In any field of activity, lack of relevant information leads to uncertainty in decision-making. The Panchayat Members were asked whether they experience any uncertainty in decision making due to the lack of information in planning activities. The details of analysis are shown in Table 4.19. It indicates that 64 per cent each of the members in southern and northern regions and 65 per cent of them in central region expressed positive responses and it is 64.14 per cent in the state, as a whole. It is also seen that more than one-third of the respondents have negative response (35.86 per cent) which is similar in three regions.

Table 4.19 Opinion of Grama Panchayat Members about the uncertainty in decision making due to the lack of information in planning activities

Region	Any uncertainty in decision making for planning activities due to lack of information?					
	Yes		No		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Southern	68	63.55	39	36.45	107	100
Central	95	65.07	51	34.93	146	100
Northern	116	63.74	66	36.26	182	100
Total	279	64.14	156	35.86	435	100

It is revealed that majority of the Grama Panchayat Members of Kerala experience uncertainty in decision making due to lack of relevant information in local level planning.

4.3.2. Information for General Purposes

The Members of Grama Panchayats in Kerala require information for various purposes. The use of information depends on the activities in which they are concentrated. As the members are part of local level planning, they need information mainly for planning and related areas of local governance. They may also require information to satisfy personal needs, to provide information to others, to keep up-to-date in daily activities and for some other purposes.

It was asked to indicate the order of preference of the respondents in using information for different purposes. A rank was assigned to each option according to their preference. Rank 1 is given to the low preference; rank 2 is given to the next higher preference and so on. A weighted mean of the ranks were computed for finding out a mean rank for each options. The preference index (Mean rank) was computed for each option of the respondents in each region separately and for the data pooled together. A high value of preference index indicates high preference to that option.

Table 4.20 Distribution of preference index to the use of information by the Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala

Use of Information	Preference Index			
	Southern	Central	Northern	Total
To satisfy the personal needs	2.10	1.94	1.86	1.95
To provide information to others	3.04	3.00	3.12	3.06
To keep up-to- date in daily activities	3.35	3.40	3.20	3.30

Others	0.85	0.76	1.04	0.90
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The analysis of data indicates that the high value of preference index is obtained for third option i.e. 'to keep up to-date in the daily activities'. The mean rank of 3.30 is very close to that of different regions. The mean ranks for other options are 3.06 'to provide information to others,' 1.95 'to satisfy the personal needs' and 0.90 for 'others'. This shows that the Members of Grama Panchayats require information mainly to keep up-to-date in the daily activities and then to provide information to others as can be seen from Table 4.20. The daily activities of the members are related to local level planning and governance.

It is found that Members of Grama Panchayats require information mainly to keep up-to-date in their daily activities of local governance.

4.3.2.1. Information to Satisfy Personal Needs

The region wise break-up of the respondents with different ranking who require 'information to meet the personal needs' is given in Table 4.21. It is seen that only about 9 per cent indicated the first preference in the state level. In southern region it is 13 per cent, 9 per cent in central region and 7 per cent in northern region. It is given Second preference by 8 per cent. Since the majority of respondents (61 per cent) indicated 'to satisfy personal needs' as the third preference. It is the highest (68 per cent) among the members of central region.

Table 4.21 Preferences in the use of information by Grama Panchayat Members to satisfy personal needs

Preferences	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	14	13.08	13	8.90	12	6.59	39	8.97
2	11	10.28	8	5.48	17	9.34	36	8.28
3	62	57.94	99	67.81	102	56.04	263	60.46

4	12	11.21	9	6.16	36	19.78	57	13.10
No response	8	7.48	17	11.64	15	8.24	40	9.20
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

The majority of the members require information not for meeting their personal needs but for some other important purposes. The members from northern region give less importance to information to satisfy personal needs.

4.3.2.2. Information Service to Others

The distribution of the members who needed information to provide the same to others is given in Table 4.22.

Table 4.22 Preferences of Grama Panchayat Members to provide information to others

Preferences	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	28	26.17	49	33.56	70	38.46	147	33.79
2	63	58.88	73	5	88	48.35	224	51.49
3	12	11.21	11	7.53	12	6.59	35	8.05
4	–	–	1	0.68	–	–	1	0.23
No response	4	3.74	12	8.22	12	6.59	28	6.44
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

The Table shows that 34 per cent of the members in the state expressed first preference 'to provide information to others'. The region wise comparison shows that it is lower in southern region (26 per cent) and higher in northern region (38 per cent). But the majority (51 per cent) treated it as the second option. It is clear that the respondents require information for some other purpose than to provide the same to others. Third preference is given by 8 per cent and 6 per cent have not responded.

It is revealed that majority of the members require information for some other purpose than to provide information to others.

4.3.2.3. Information for Daily Activities of the Members

Preferences in the use of information to keep up-to-date in daily activities of the respondents are as shown in Table 4.23. Members who opted it as the first preference in southern region is the highest (58 per cent) and lowest in northern region (48 per cent). It is seen that 53.79 per cent of the respondents in the state require information to keep up-to-date in daily activities. Second preference is given by 32 per cent; third preference by 9 per cent and 5 per cent has not responded.

Table 4.23 Preferences in the use of information by the Grama Panchayat Members to keep up- to- date in daily activities

Preferences	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	62	57.94	84	57.53	88	48.35	234	53.79
2	28	26.17	49	33.56	64	35.16	141	32.41
3	13	12.15	7	4.79	18	9.89	38	8.74
4	–	–	–	–	2	1.10	2	0.46
No response	4	3.74	6	4.11	10	5.49	20	4.60
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

It is found that majority of the Members need information to keep up-to-date in daily activities of local governance and it justifies the high mean index computed for this option. It is also revealed that more members of southern Kerala require information for this purpose.

4.3.2.4. Information for Other Purposes

When respondents were asked about the need of information for 'other purposes', 58 per cent consider it as the fourth option, 14 per cent as the third option and 27 per cent have not responded. A very few members have expressed first and second options as shown in Table 4.24.

Table 4.24 Preferences in the use of information by the Grama Panchayat Members for other purposes

Preference	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	1	0.93	2	1.37	–	–	3	0.69
2	–	–	1	0.68	2	1.10	3	0.69
3	14	13.08	8	5.48	37	20.33	59	13.56
4	59	55.14	84	57.53	110	60.44	253	58.16
No response	33	30.84	51	34.93	33	18.13	117	26.90
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

It is found that majority of the Grama Panchayat Members consider the requirement of information for other purposes as least important and in northern region no member needs information for other purposes than the mentioned.

4.3.3. Information for Specific Purposes

The elected members are political activists, social workers, labourers, traders, professionals or unemployed people. Irrespective of occupations, they require various kind of information. The area in which they are concentrated may vary from person to person. Most of the members have political affiliation and they may require

information for political activities in addition to planning activities. They may also need information for educational purposes, to update skills in occupation and for some other purpose. The respondents were asked to express their preferences of information needs in order to understand the most dominant area.

Table 4.25 Distribution of preference index to the information needs of Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala

Information Needs	Preference Index			
	Southern	Central	Northern	Total
Political activities	2.70	2.77	2.95	2.83
Planning activities	4.00	4.06	4.15	4.08
Educational activities	3.20	3.32	3.47	3.35
Occupational activities	2.70	2.48	2.44	2.52
Other activities	0.69	0.69	0.73	0.71

The mean rank computed for the preferences are shown in Table.4.25. It indicates that the preference index for 'Planning activities' is 4.08. It is followed by 'updating of general knowledge' (3.35); 'political activities' (2.83) and 'updating skills in employment' (2.52). The mean rank for the option 'others' is 0.71. The mean rank 'for political activities' in northern region (2.95) is higher than that of southern (2.70) and central (2.77) regions. It is seen that mean rank 'for planning activities' has highest value in northern region (4.15) when compared to southern region (4.00) and central region (4.06). Southern region has higher value of mean rank (2.70) 'for updating skills in occupation'.

It is revealed that the Grama Panchayat Members need information mainly for planning activities and the requirement is seen to be highest among the members of northern region. Figure 4.7 shows the distribution of preference index to the information needs of Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala

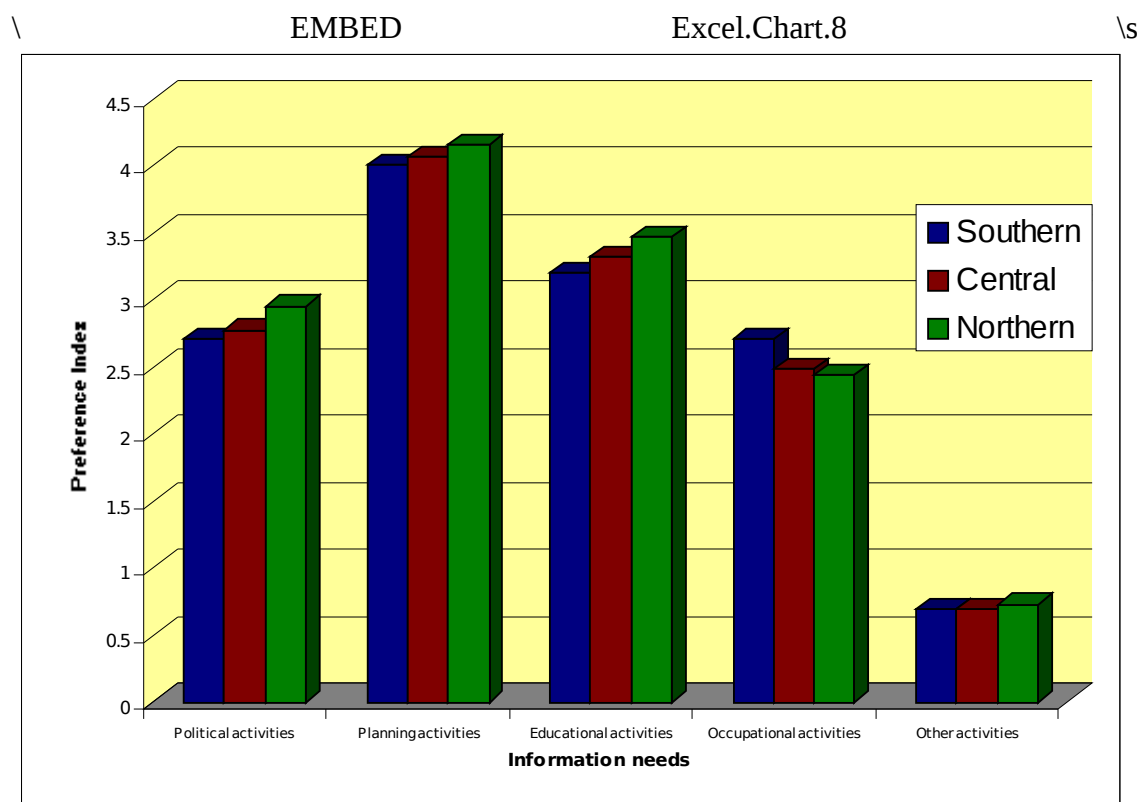


Figure 4.7. Distribution of preference index to the information needs of Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala

4.3.3.1. Political Activities

The preferences in the information needs of the respondents for political activities are shown in Table 4.26.

Table 4.26 Preferences in the information needs of the Grama Panchayat Members for political activities

Preferences	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	16	14.95	15	10.27	28	15.38	59	13.56

2	17	15.89	30	20.55	44	24.18	91	20.92
3	29	27.10	41	28.08	39	21.43	109	25.06
4	26	24.30	40	27.40	49	26.92	115	26.44
5	2	1.87	6	4.11	5	2.75	13	2.99
No response	17	15.89	14	9.59	17	9.34	48	11.03
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

It is seen that 14 per cent of the respondents need information for political activities as their first choice. In the northern region comparatively more number of members needs information for political work. In southern and central regions 15 per cent and 10 per cent each of the members need information for political activities. Second preference is indicated by 21 per cent. Third and fourth preferences are expressed by 25 per cent and 26 per cent of the respondents respectively. Fifth option is given by only 3 per cent and 11 per cent did not respond.

The study establishes that majority of the Grama Panchayat Members need information for purposes other than political activities.

4.3.3.2. Planning Activities

The preferences in the information needs of Grama Panchayat Members for planning activities are given in Table 4.27. It shows that nearly 49 per cent of the members indicate first preference 'to planning activities'. A few, 31 per cent and 12 per cent of the members respectively showed second and third preferences. The first and second preferences to planning activities in the three regions are almost the same. No response was received from 5 per cent of the members regarding the use of information for planning activities.

Table 4.27 Preferences in the information needs of the Grama Panchayat Members for planning activities

Preferences	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	52	48.60	70	47.95	89	48.90	211	48.51
2	33	30.84	44	30.14	57	31.32	134	30.80
3	8	7.48	21	14.38	26	14.29	55	12.64
4	6	5.61	2	1.37	2	1.10	10	2.30
No response	8	7.48	9	6.16	8	4.40	25	5.75
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

The study revealed that about half of the Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala need information for planning activities and more members from northern region use information for this purpose.

4.3.3.3. Educational Activities

Some of the members need information for educational purposes. The preferences of the members for educational activities are given in Table 4.28. The members of the central region are more (28.77 per cent) in showing the first preference to educational activities when compared to southern region (16.82 per cent) and northern region (20.88 per cent). In the state, the first preference is given by 22 per cent of members to educational activities. Members with second and third preferences are more in the northern region. It is seen that 31 percent and 26 per cent each of the members preferred it as the second and third choices respectively in the state level. Only 11 per cent preferred it as the fourth choice. Those who have no opinion about this option are 10 per cent.

Table 4.28 Preferences in the information needs of Grama Panchayat

Members for educational activities

Preferences	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	18	16.82	42	28.77	38	20.88	98	22.53
2	30	28.04	42	28.77	61	33.52	133	30.57
3	32	29.91	25	17.12	56	30.77	113	25.98
4	18	16.82	16	10.96	15	8.24	49	11.26
No response	9	8.41	21	14.38	12	6.59	42	9.66
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

It is revealed that the Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala who require information mainly for educational activities are comparatively less. However, some of them need information for educational purposes and comparatively the requirement is high among the members of northern Kerala.

4.3.3.4. Occupational Activities

The preferences of the members in using information ‘to update skills in occupation’ are shown in Table 4.29. At the state level, the first preference is indicated by 12.64 per cent which is lower than that of the southern region (15.89 per cent) and higher than that of northern region (10.99 per cent). Members with second preference in the southern region (16.82 per cent) are equal to the sum of members in the other two regions (8 per cent each). Third and fourth preferences are given by 25 per cent, 37 per cent of members respectively. It is seen that less number of respondents have indicated ‘to update skills in occupation’ as first and second preferences. More than 15 percent of them have no responses.

Table 4.29 Preferences in the information needs of Grama Panchayat Members for ‘occupational activities’

Preferences	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	17	15.89	18	12.33	20	10.99	55	12.64
2	18	16.82	12	8.22	14	7.69	44	10.11
3	22	20.56	41	28.08	45	24.73	108	24.83
4	33	30.84	50	34.25	76	41.76	159	36.55
5	–	–	1	0.68	1	0.55	2	0.46
No response	17	15.89	24	16.44	26	14.29	67	15.40
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

The analysis showed that the information requirement for occupational activities is not the prime need of the majority of the Grama Panchayat Members. However, more members of southern region need information related to occupation.

4.3.3.5. Other Activities

The preferences of the respondents who consider the use of information for other purposes are given Table 4.30. It can be seen that the first four preferences in the three regions are negligible and in certain cases, preferences are not shown. Majority of them preferred it as the fifth choice (52 per cent) and a good many members (42 per cent) have not responded.

Table 4.30 Preferences in the information needs of Grama Panchayat Members for ‘other activities’

Preferences	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	1	0.93	2	1.37	1	0.55	4	0.92
2	1	0.93	3	2.05	–	–	4	0.92
3	4	3.74	–	–	2	1.10	6	1.38

4	1	0.93	6	4.11	6	3.30	13	2.99
5	51	47.66	67	45.89	109	59.89	227	52.18
No response	49	45.79	68	46.58	64	35.16	181	41.61
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

It is revealed that majority of the members consider the information needs for 'other purposes' as least important. They require information for other purposes only after satisfying their needs mainly for planning activities and then for educational, political, occupational activities.

4.3.4 Information for Decentralised Planning

The decentralised planning was initiated in Kerala in the year 1996 and the ninth plan (1997-2002) was popularly known as People's Planning Campaign. It consisted of mainly five phases.

They are given below:

- 1) Identification of felt needs in Grama Sabha and preparation of development report
- 2) Plan formulation
- 3) Plan evaluation
- 4) Plan implementation
- 5) Monitoring and evaluation

Development report was prepared based on a series of studies related to local geography and natural resources. The relevant secondary data is also collected. Grama Sabha reports were also consolidated and presented before a development seminar. Annual plans were prepared at the Grama Sabha level for each local body. The elected

members of wards of the local bodies need different kind of information in all these phases.

Table 4.31 Distribution of preference index to the phases of planning based on the information needs of the Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala

Phases of Planning	Preference Index			
	Southern	Central	Northern	Total
Preparation of development report	3.70	4.70	4.55	4.39
Plan formulation	4.59	4.57	4.77	4.66
Plan evaluation	2.38	2.53	2.94	2.66
Plan implementation	3.24	3.01	3.35	3.21
Monitoring and Evaluation	2.35	2.27	2.42	2.35
Others	1.18	0.75	0.83	0.89

The members of Grama Panchayats were asked to rank the above phases of decentralised planning based on their information requirements. Their responses were collected and presented in Table 4.31. It shows the mean ranks computed for each phase of planning in different regions and for the cumulative responses in the state. The preference indexes computed for the 'preparation of development' report are 3.70 in southern region, 4.70 in central region and 4.55 in the northern region. The mean rank for the state is found to be 4.39. Preference indexes for 'plan formulation' in the three regions are 4.59, 4.57 and 4.77 respectively. It has the highest value (4.66) in the state level. The mean ranks for 'plan evaluation', 'plan implementation' and 'monitoring and evaluation' in the regions show identical values. In the state, the values for these phases are 2.66, 3.21 and 2.35 respectively. It shows that they require information mainly for 'plan formulation' and 'preparation of development report'. Other phases in the decreasing order of information requirements are 'plan Implementation', 'plan evaluation', and 'monitoring and evaluation'. The mean ranks are computed based on different preferences of all the respondents. Therefore, the number of members not

responded may affect the mean rank. Further, detailed analysis of the information requirements for different phases of planning is given.

4.3.4.1. Preparation of Development Report

Development reports were prepared by all the local bodies in Kerala as part of the Peoples Planning Campaign. The development reports of all Grama Panchayats under each Block Panchayat of Kerala have been bound and the State Planning Board has distributed 152 volumes each of these reports to all the University Libraries of Kerala. It is a very important document of local bodies in Kerala. The Grama Panchayat Members have indicated their preferences in the information requirements 'for the preparation of development report' as shown in Table 4.32.

Table 4.32 Preferences in the information requirements of the Grama Panchayat Members ‘for the preparation of development report’

Preferences	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	45	42.06	92	63.01	91	50.00	228	52.41
2	17	15.89	19	13.01	41	22.53	77	17.70
3	4	3.74	6	4.11	11	6.04	21	4.83
4	3	2.80	3	2.05	2	1.10	8	1.84
5	8	7.48	3	2.05	13	7.14	24	5.52
6	–	–	–	–	1	0.55	1	0.23
No response	30	28.04	23	15.75	23	12.64	76	17.47
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

It is seen that 52 per cent of the members prefer to use information ‘for the preparation of development report’ as their first option and 18 per cent as their second option. The distribution of respondents against first preference is 42 per cent in southern region, 63 per cent in central region and 50 per cent in northern region. Preferences from 3 to 6 are indicated by less number of respondents. It seems to be very strange that 17 per cent of the members have not responded regarding the use of information for the preparation of development report. This may be due to the fact that the development report of the local bodies were prepared ten years back and such a massive effort was not undertaken thereafter. Therefore, naturally the new members might not have associated with it.

It is found that majority of Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala prefer to use information ‘for the preparation of development report’ and the use of information for this purpose is more among the members of central region.

4.3.4.2 Plan formulation

The felt needs of the local people are discussed in Grama Sabhas. Plans are formulated in different sectors of decentralised planning with the assistance of experts and staff of the Government Departments. Development seminars are held to finalise plan proposals and projects are prepared. All these activities require information. The responses of Panchayat Members regarding their preference to the need of information 'for plan formulation' have been analysed and the summary is given in Table 4.33. It shows that 35.51 per cent of the respondents of southern region, 26.71 per cent of the central region and 32.97 per cent of the northern region indicate first preference 'for plan evaluation'. At the state level, the first preference is indicated by 31.49 per cent of the members. Second preference is shown by 40 per cent in southern Kerala, 49 percent in central Kerala and 47 per cent in northern Kerala. Preferences from 3 to 5 are comparatively less and 40 members (9 per cent) have not responded.

Table 4.33 Preferences in the information requirements of the Grama Panchayat Members 'for plan formulation'

Preferences	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	38	35.51	39	26.71	60	32.97	137	31.49
2	43	40.19	72	49.32	86	47.25	201	46.21
3	7	6.54	15	10.27	11	6.04	33	7.59
4	6	5.61	3	2.05	10	5.49	19	4.37
5	1	0.93	2	1.37	2	1.10	5	1.15
No response	12	11.21	15	10.27	13	7.14	40	9.20
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

The analysis showed that majority of the respondents do not prefer information requirement for plan formulation as their first preference in spite of the high mean rank computed for plan formulation. It is found to be the second preference to a good number of the respondents.

4.3.4.3 Plan Evaluation

The formulated plans after discussions and scrutiny are submitted to higher levels in the form of projects. The projects are evaluated at Block Panchayat or District Panchayat levels depending upon the nature of implementation. The Grama Panchayat Members were asked to indicate their preference in the requirement of information 'for plan evaluation'.

Table 4.34 Preferences in the information requirements of the Grama Panchayat Members 'for plan evaluation'

Preferences	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	3	2.80	1	0.68	3	1.65	7	1.61
2	13	12.15	11	7.53	11	6.04	35	8.05
3	34	31.78	45	30.82	87	47.80	166	38.16
4	10	9.35	31	21.23	32	17.58	73	16.78
5	1	0.93	16	10.96	8	4.40	25	5.75
6	4	3.74	3	2.05	2	1.10	9	2.07
No response	42	39.25	39	26.71	39	21.43	120	27.59
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

The details are presented in Table 4.34. It is seen that only 1.61 per cent of them indicated first preference. But a considerable number of members (38 per cent) have indicated their third preference. Responses regarding the information requirement 'for plan evaluation' were not indicated by 28 per cent of the members. It is clear that the

Panchayat Members do not require information for plan evaluation, as it is being done at higher levels, i.e. at Block Panchayat and District Panchayat levels.

The study revealed that majority of Grama Panchayat Members do not require information in the phase of plan evaluation as the evaluation of plans are done at Block Panchayat and District Panchayat levels.

4.3.4.4 Plan Implementation

The Plan Implementation requires different types of information that will be more technical in nature. The preferences of the respondents with regard to 'plan implementation' are given in Table 4.35. The first preference is given by 3.74 per cent in south, 2.74 per cent in central and 4.95 per cent in north Kerala. It is seen that only 17 members (3.91 per cent) expressed first preference in the state. Second preference is indicated by 13 per cent. The third and fourth preferences are given by 26 per cent and 40 per cent respectively. Preferences are not indicated by 12 per cent of the members. At this stage, the information required will be of technical in nature and the members normally do not attend this work.

Table 4.35 Preferences in the information requirements of the Grama Panchayat Members 'for plan implementation'

Preferences	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	4	3.74	4	2.74	9	4.95	17	3.91
2	19	17.76	14	9.59	24	13.19	57	13.10
3	29	27.10	41	28.08	42	23.08	112	25.75
4	34	31.78	55	37.67	85	46.70	174	40.00
5	5	4.67	6	4.11	6	3.30	17	3.91
6	–	–	4	2.74	–	–	4	0.92
No response	16	14.95	22	15.07	16	8.79	54	12.41
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

It is found that the information needs of majority of the members for plan implementation are not significant as this phase require more technical data and the technical staff would be responsible for the implementation of projects.

4.3.4.5 Monitoring and Evaluation

The implementing projects are to be monitored and evaluated in terms of quality. The preference of the information needs 'for monitoring and evaluation' by the members is given in Table 4.36. The first preference for this phase of planning is indicated by 5.61 percent of the respondents in the southern region, 2.05 per cent in the central region and 3.85 per cent in the northern region. It is found to be 3.68 per cent for the whole state. A good number of respondents (46 per cent) have indicated fifth preference to this option and 17 per cent have not responded.

Table 4.36 Preferences in the information requirements of the Grama Panchayat Members for 'monitoring and evaluation' of projects

Preferences	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	6	5.61	3	2.05	7	3.85	16	3.68
2	3	2.80	10	6.85	13	7.14	26	5.98
3	15	14.02	17	11.64	15	8.24	47	10.80
4	23	21.50	21	14.38	25	13.74	69	15.86
5	35	32.71	66	45.21	99	54.40	200	45.98
6	1	0.93	1	0.68	1	0.55	3	0.69
No response	24	22.43	28	19.18	22	12.09	74	17.01
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

The study showed that majority of Grama Panchayat Members do not require information for monitoring and evaluation of projects as it is the duty of the technical staff to assess the work.

4.3.4.6 Information for Other Purposes

The members were asked whether they require information for the purposes other than the items mentioned. The analysis of responses regarding preference to information requirement 'for other purposes' shows that 40 per cent of them preferred it as the sixth option and 48 per cent have no options other than the mentioned. Only 3.68 per cent shows the first option and the other options are negligible. The details are given in Table 4.37.

Table 4.37 Preferences in the information requirements of the Grama Panchayat Members 'for other purposes'

Preferences	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	8	7.48	3	2.05	5	2.75	16	3.68
2	1	0.93	3	2.05	1	0.55	5	1.15
3	6	5.61	4	2.74	1	0.55	11	2.53
4	2	1.87	3	2.05	4	2.20	9	2.07
5	6	5.61	3	2.05	4	2.20	13	2.99
6	31	28.97	52	35.62	92	50.55	175	40.23
No Response	53	49.53	78	54.11	75	41.21	206	47.59

Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100
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The preference to information needs of the members for other purposes is found to be less significant and about half of them are not sure about other purposes of information needs.

4.4. Information Sources of Grama Panchayat Members

The elected representatives get information from various sources. These sources are broadly classified into interpersonal contacts, print sources, audiovisual sources and digital information sources. Telephonic contacts, colleagues, training programme/workshop, conference and meetings, staff of government departments etc. that involve the elements of personal interaction are included in the interpersonal contacts. The print sources consist of government publications, handbooks/manuals distributed to the members and other printed materials such as government orders, circulars etc. Internet is the main source of digital information. Responses were obtained from the members regarding their awareness of the information sources, the use of the information sources and the effectiveness of providing relevant information.

4.4.1 Awareness of Information Sources

The awareness of the elected representatives of Grama Panchayats about the sources of information and relevance in decentralised planning has to be examined. If somebody needs information, he or she should be aware of the purpose and the context in which it is required. Otherwise the whole search will be futile. Therefore, it is necessary for the Grama Panchayat Members of Kerala to know the context of requirement and the relevance of information. The identification of relevant sources is also a matter of great concern

4.4.1.1 Relevance of Information

The members were asked to express their awareness of information sources that provide relevant information. The summary is given in Table 4.38. It shows that 57 per cent of the respondents of southern region, 60 per cent of central region and 65 per cent of northern region indicated their awareness. In the state level, 61.15 per cent of Members have indicated that they are aware of the information sources.

Table 4.38 Opinion of the Grama Panchayat Members about information sources

Regions	Aware of the sources that provide relevant information in decentralised planning?					
	Yes		No		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Southern	61	57.01	46	42.99	107	100
Central	87	59.59	59	40.41	146	100
Northern	118	64.84	64	35.16	182	100
Total	266	61.15	169	38.85	435	100

It is found that majority of the Members of Grama Panchayats in Kerala are aware of the information sources relevant to the decentralised planning and the members of northern region are more conscious of the information sources.

4.4.1.2 Relevance of Training Programme/ Workshop

Responses of the members about the relevance of training programme/ workshops in providing required information were collected and the summary is in Table 4.39. It is seen that 69 per cent of the members responded positively. The percentage of respondents in the southern region is less, (61.68 per cent) in the northern region it is more (73.63 per cent) and in the central region it is equal to the responses in the state level. It shows that a good number of respondents consider the training programme/ workshop as a relevant source of information

Table 4.39 Opinion of the Grama Panchayat Members of Kerala about the relevance of training programme/workshop in providing required information

Regions	Training programme/workshop relevant in providing required information?					
	Yes		No		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Southern	66	61.68	41	38.32	107	100
Central	101	69.18	45	30.82	146	100
Northern	134	73.63	48	26.37	182	100
Total	301	69.20	134	30.80	435	100

It is found that majority of Grama Panchayat Members of Kerala consider the training programmes/workshops relevant in providing required information for decentralised planning and more members of northern region are of this opinion.

4.4.1.3 Relevance of Handbooks/ Manuals

Handbooks and manuals were distributed to the members in the training programme. The relevance of the above materials in providing the required information is examined by obtaining responses from the Panchayat Members. The summary is shown in Table 4.40. It shows that 61 per cent of the respondents of southern region, 53 per cent of central region and 59 percent of the northern region consider the handbooks/manuals relevant in providing required information. Positive responses are indicated by 57.24 per cent Members in whole Kerala. Nearly 43 per cent of the members are not fully satisfied with the handbooks/manuals.

Table 4.40 Opinion of the Grama Panchayat Members about the relevance of handbooks/manuals

Regions	Whether handbooks/manuals relevant in providing required information?					
	Yes		No		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Southern	65	60.75	42	39.25	107	100
Central	77	52.74	69	47.26	146	100
Northern	107	58.79	75	41.21	182	100
Total	249	57.24	186	42.76	435	100

It is revealed that majority of the Members of Grama Panchayats in Kerala consider the handbooks/manuals distributed in training programme/workshop relevant in providing information. More members from southern Kerala consider them relevant.

4.4.1.4 Relevance of Government Orders/Circulars

Government orders and circulars are very important sources of information as far as the policies and priorities of the Government are concerned. A number of Government Orders and Circulars pertaining to local governance are issued from the Panchayat Department. The Grama Panchayat Members were asked to express their opinion about the relevance of Government Orders and Circulars in providing required information. The summary of responses is presented in Table 4.41.

Table 4.41 Opinion of the Grama Panchayat Members about the relevance of Government Orders and Circulars

Regions	Whether Government orders and circulars provide the required information?					
	Yes		No		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Southern	73	68.22	34	31.78	107	100
Central	87	59.59	59	40.41	146	100
Northern	105	57.69	77	42.31	182	100
Total	265	60.92	170	39.08	435	100

It shows that 68.22 percent of the members of southern region indicated positive responses which are the highest among the three regions. The positive responses in the central and northern region are 59.59 per cent and 57.69 per cent respectively. It is seen that 61 per cent of the members in Kerala indicate positive responses. Large majority of Members of Grama Panchayats in Kerala consider Government Orders and Circulars as relevant sources of information.

It is revealed that majority of the Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala consider Government Orders and Circulars as relevant sources of information in decentralised planning and more members of southern region are of this view.

4.4.1.5 Relevance of other Information Sources

When asked whether they collect information from other sources, 83.52 per cent members of northern region, 79.45 per cent members of central region and 69.16 percent members of southern region have indicated positive responses. It is seen that 78.62 per cent of the members consider 'other sources' of information as relevant. Details are given in Table 4.42.

Table 4.42 Opinion of the Grama Panchayat Members about collection of information from other sources

Regions	Whether collect information from other sources?					
	Yes		No		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Southern	74	69.16	33	30.84	107	100
Central	116	79.45	30	20.55	146	100
Northern	152	83.52	30	16.48	182	100
Total	342	78.62	93	21.38	435	100

It is found that majority of the Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala collect information from other relevant sources to meet the information requirements in different phases of decentralised planning. The members of northern Kerala are much ahead in collecting information from other sources.

4.4.2 Use of Information Sources

The elected members of Grama Panchayat in Kerala depend to different sources to get required information. They use telephonic contacts, internet, printed materials, colleagues and some other sources for information. They were asked to indicate their preferences in the use of these information sources.

4.4.2.1 Preference Index to Use of Information Sources

The preference index computed using weighted means is presented in Table 4.43. It shows that telephone is the most frequently used source with mean rank of 3.71. The values of preference index to telephone in the three regions are found to be higher in southern region (3.87) followed by northern region (3.86) and central region (3.42). The mean ranks for other sources are 1.22 (internet), 3.31 (printed materials), 3.68 (colleagues) and 1.29 (other sources).

Table 4.43 Preference Index to different sources for getting particular information

Information sources	Preference Index			
	Southern	Central	Northern	Total
Telephone	3.87	3.42	3.86	3.71
Internet	1.06	1.24	1.31	1.22
Print sources	3.03	3.19	3.57	3.31
Colleagues	3.78	3.79	3.52	3.68
Other Sources	1.21	1.23	1.37	1.29

It shows that telephone is extensively used by the members to get information. The use of internet is less when compared to others sources. 'Colleagues' constitute a very important source followed by 'telephone'. As these two sources are related with human elements, they may be treated as sources of interpersonal communication. The use of different sources among the members of the three regions does not show any remarkable variation.

It is found that majority of members mainly depend telephone to get required information. Interpersonal communication is found to be the dominant sources of information among the members. Figure 4.8 shows the Preference Index to different sources for getting particular information.

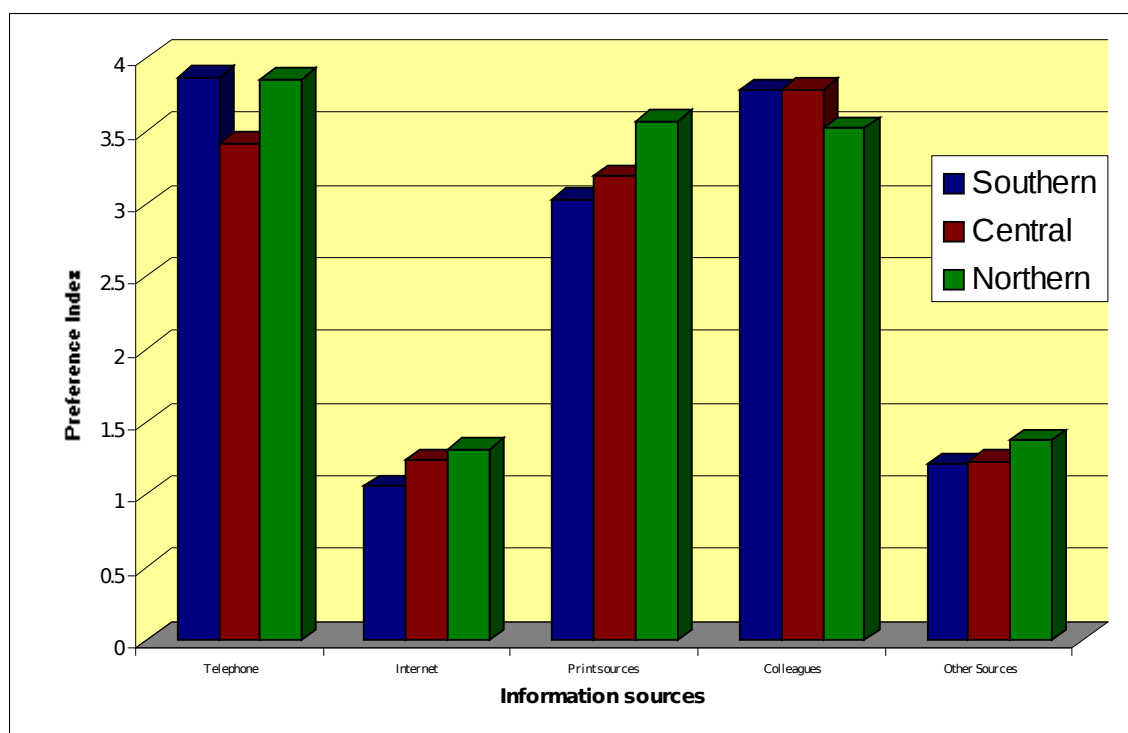


Figure 4.8. Preference Index to different sources for getting particular information

4.4.2.2 Preferences in the use of Information Sources

The preferences in the use of above sources by the Grama Panchayat Members to get the required information are shown in Table 4.44.

Table 4.44 Distribution of the Grama Panchayat Members according to first preference to information sources

Information Sources	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Telephone	46	42.99	42	28.77	83	46.60	171	39.31
Internet	3	2.80	2	1.37	1	0.55	6	1.38
Print Sources	16	14.95	27	18.49	43	23.63	86	19.77
Colleagues	37	34.58	63	43.15	39	21.43	139	31.95
Other Sources	3	2.80	8	5.48	11	6.04	22	5.06

It shows that 39.31 per cent of the members prefer telephone as their first source. The distribution in the three regions is 43 per cent (South), 29 per cent

(Central) and 47 per cent (North). It is seen that 31.95 per cent of them prefer colleagues as the first source. The distribution is higher in the central region (43.15 per cent) than that of southern region (34.58 per cent) and northern region (21.43 per cent). Printed sources are preferred as the first source by 19.77 per cent of the respondents. Other sources are preferred by 5.06 per cent. The first preference to internet as a source is shown by 1.38 per cent of the members.

Telephonic enquiries and clarifications from colleagues cater to the information needs to Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala. Both of them include human elements and hence interpersonal communication among members is found to be very important. It is also found that internet is less used by the members.

4.4.2.3 Preference Index to Sources and Satisfaction of Members

The use of information sources to get particular information is different from the sources that satisfy the members. The former cater to the instant needs while the later provides some detailed description of the problem. Training programmes/workshops, handbooks/manuals, mass media, colleagues, staff of the Government Departments and sometimes other sources provide in-depth knowledge about specific problems. The members were requested to indicate the preferences to the sources based on their satisfaction in getting information. The preference index to the above information sources are presented in Table 4.45.

Table 4.45 Distribution of preference index to information sources according to satisfaction of the Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala

Information Sources	Preference Index
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	Southern	Central	Northern	Total
Training Programme/Workshop	5.17	4.88	5.34	5.14
Handbooks/Manuals	4.15	3.92	4.13	4.06
Mass media	3.18	3.25	3.37	3.28
Colleagues	3.50	3.29	3.25	3.33
Staff of Government Department	2.85	2.88	2.61	2.76
Others	0.63	0.65	0.66	0.65

It is seen that training programme/workshop has the highest value of mean rank (5.14) in the state level. The values of mean rank are 5.17 in southern region, 4.88 in central region and 5.34 in northern region. The preference index for handbooks/manuals is 4.06 and the values are similar in the three regions. The values of mean rank in respect of mass media, colleagues, staff of Government Departments and others are found to be almost identical in the three regions. Colleagues are the third source on the basis of satisfaction in getting information with mean rank of 3.33 followed by mass media (3.28), staff of Government Department (2.76) and others (0.65).

It is revealed that training programme/workshop is the most preferred source by the members followed by handbook/manuals, colleagues, mass media, staff of Government Departments and others.

Further, the detailed analysis of the information sources based on the first preference is given.

4.4.2.4 Preference to Sources according to Satisfaction in getting Information

The findings in respect of the above sources based on satisfaction can be further explained based on first preferences with the help of Table.4.46.

Table 4.46 Distribution of the Grama Panchayat Members according to the first preference to information sources

Information Sources	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Training Programme/Workshop	63	53.88	81	55.48	124	68.13	268	61.61
Handbooks/Manuals	18	16.82	26	17.81	22	12.09	66	15.17
Mass Media	12	11.21	12	8.22	8	4.40	32	7.36
Colleagues	9	8.41	11	7.53	16	8.79	36	8.28
Staff of Government Departments	6	5.61	11	7.53	7	3.85	24	5.52
Others	2	1.87	4	2.74	-	-	6	1.38

It shows that 61.61 per cent of the respondents indicated first preference to 'training programme/workshop' and the distribution is 53.88 per cent in southern region, 55.48 per cent in central region and 68.13 per cent in northern region. Handbooks/manuals are preferred by 15.17 per cent of members. Mass media, colleagues and staff of Government Departments are preferred by 7.36 per cent, 8.28 per cent, and 5.52 per cent of the members respectively. In the northern region nobody has opted first preference to other sources. Other sources are preferred by 4 members from central region and 2 members from southern region as their first option and thus 1.38 per cent members preferred it. Majority of members prefer training programme/workshop, as their first choice to get more information as there is no other effective sources. This inference indicates the need for strengthening the training programme.

It is revealed that majority of the members prefer training programme/workshop as their prime source of information. More members of northern region are of this opinion.

4.4.3. Rating of Information Sources in Decentralised Planning

The Grama Panchayat Members have attended various training programmes after the commencement of decentralised planning in Kerala. Handbooks/Manuals and other printed materials have been distributed in the training programme. In addition to this, Government orders and circulars also help the members to understand more about different schemes and programmes of the Local Self Government Department. The respondents were asked to rate the information sources based on a three point scale.

4.4.3.1. Training Programmes

The responses regarding the usefulness of training programmes obtained have been presented in Table 4.47. It is seen that 45.52 per cent of the respondents rate training programme 'very useful' and 52.87 per cent rated them 'useful'. Only 7 members (1.61 per cent) rated it 'not useful'. As such, in order to make it very useful for majority of the members, the training programmes have to be strengthened and made more effective by conducting at District or Block levels. Figure 4.9 shows the usefulness of the training programmes attended by the Grama Panchayat Members.

Table 4.47 Usefulness of the training programmes attended by the Grama Panchayat Members

Response	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Very Useful	46	42.99	70	47.95	82	45.05	198	45.52
Useful	60	56.07	73	50.00	97	53.30	230	52.87
Not Useful	1	0.93	3	2.05	3	1.65	7	1.61
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

It is found that large majority of the members rated training programmes as 'useful' and 'very useful'. More members from central region rate training programme as very useful.

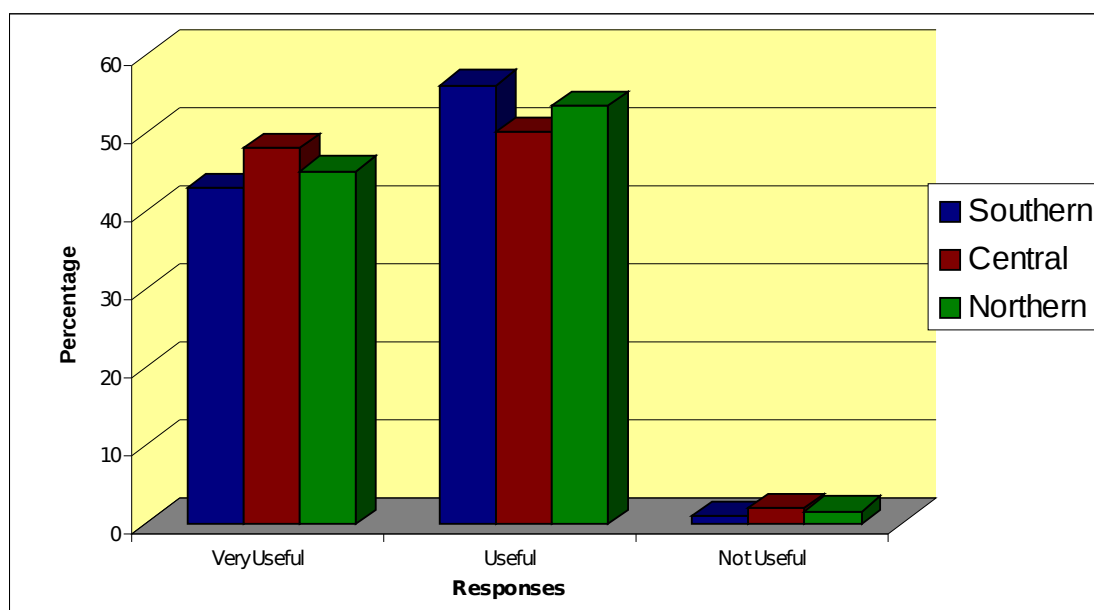


Figure 4.9. Usefulness of the training programmes attended by the Grama Panchayat Members

4.4.3.2. Printed Materials

The usefulness of printed materials other than handbooks/manuals has been examined and the result is shown in Table 4.48. It can be seen that 39.54 per cent of the members consider printed materials very 'useful'. 57.24 per cent rated them as 'useful'. A few members (3.22 per cent) rated the training programme as 'not useful'. As such there is a need for improving the content of printed materials in order to make it more useful to the majority of Grama Panchayat Members

Table 4.48 Usefulness of the printed material distributed to the Grama Panchayat Members in the training programmes

Response	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Very Useful	43	40.19	60	41.10	69	37.91	172	39.54
Useful	62	57.94	81	55.48	106	58.24	249	57.24
Not Useful	2	1.87	5	3.42	7	3.85	14	3.22
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

It is revealed that the printed materials supplied in the training programme are found to be useful for majority of the members. The rating of the printed materials by the members is irrespective of region.

4.4.3.3. Handbooks/Manuals

The summary of responses of the members regarding the usefulness of handbooks/manuals in the decentralised planning in Kerala is presented in Table 4.49. It can be seen that 38.39 per cent of members rated the hand books/manuals as very useful in the state. The members who consider the above sources as very useful are higher in southern region (45.79 per cent) than central region (35 per cent) and northern region (37 per cent). It is seen that 62 per cent each of the members in central and northern region and 54 per cent in southern region consider it useful only. Nearly 60 per cent of the respondents rated them as useful and few of the members (1.84 per cent) rated them as not useful. However, it should be revised and made more useful to all the Grama Panchayat Members.

Table 4.49 Usefulness of the handbooks/manuals supplied to the Grama Panchayat Members in the training programmes

Response	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Very useful	49	45.79	51	34.93	67	36.81	167	38.39
Useful	58	54.21	90	61.64	112	61.54	260	59.77
Not useful	–	–	5	3.42	3	1.65	8	1.84
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

It is found that majority of the members consider the handbooks/manuals useful.

4.4.3.4. Government Orders and Circulars

The rating of Government orders and circulars is shown in Table 4.50. These are very useful to 38.39 per cent and useful to 57.48 per cent of the members. There are 18 members (4.14 per cent) who consider it as not useful. The ambiguity in Government orders and circulars and their redundancy may be the reason for treating them moderately useful. Moreover, the members except Presidents and Vice-Presidents are not expected to refer Government orders and circulars.

Table 4.50 Usefulness of Government orders and circulars in decentralized planning

Response	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Very Useful	45	42.06	62	42.47	60	32.97	167	38.39
Useful	57	53.27	76	52.05	117	64.29	250	57.47
Not Useful	5	4.67	8	5.48	5	2.75	18	4.14
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

It is revealed that Government orders and circulars are useful for the majority of members. More members from central region rate these as very useful while majority of the members from northern region rate these as useful.

4.4.4. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for Comparing Usefulness of Information Sources between groups

The usefulness of the information sources in decentralised planning by the respondents on the basis of groups formed by region, status, age and educational qualifications were compared using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Least Significant Difference (LSD) test was used for pair wise comparison and t-test was used to compare male and female members.

4.4.4.1. ANOVA for Comparing between Regions

The respondents of the three regions of Kerala were compared using ANOVA in order to understand the difference in the usefulness of information sources in local level planning. The F-value computed for comparing the regions is given in Table 4.51 and the average score for each region with standard deviation is given in Table 4.52.

Table 4.51 ANOVA 1: Comparison of the use of information sources by Grama Panchayat Members of different regions.

Source of Variation	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F
Between Regions	2	1.18	0.592	0.105^{ns}
Within Regions	432	2434.78	5.636	-
Total	434	2435.96	-	-

ns - non significant at 5 % level

F-value for comparing between regions is found to be non significant (0.105) at 5 per cent level of significance and at 2 degree of freedom. This implies that the usefulness of information sources in decentralised planning is the same in the three regions of Kerala.

Table 4. 52 Average score and standard deviation of the score in different regions

Region Groups	Average	Standard deviation
Southern	9.61	2.46
Central	9.57	2.55
Northern	9.48	2.16

In each region the average score is found to be around 9 which indicate that the information sources are equally useful to the respondents of all the three regions.

It is found that the information sources listed are uniformly useful to the Grama Panchayat Members of Kerala irrespective of regions.

4.4.4.2. ANOVA for comparing between age groups

The usefulness of information sources among groups formed on the basis of age can be explained with the help of Table 4.53. In this case the F-value is found to be significant (4.41) at one per cent level of significance and at 4 degree of freedom. It indicates that there is significant difference in the usefulness of information sources in decentralised planning among different age groups.

Table 4.53 ANOVA 2: Comparison of the use of information sources by the Grama Panchayat Members of different age groups

Source of Variation	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F
Between Age Groups	4	96.08	24.02	4.41**
Within Age Groups	430	2339.89	5.44	-
Total	434	2435.96	-	-

** significant at 1% level

The result of Least Significant Difference (LSD) test used for comparing the pairs of groups is shown in Table 4.54. The average score and the standard deviation of the score in different age groups are presented for comparisons. It shows that the respondents belonging to the age group of below 30 and above 60 are more benefited with the information sources. Usefulness of information sources for the members belonging to above 30 and below 60 age groups is seen to be homogenous.

Table 4.54 Average score and standard deviation of the score in different age groups

Age Groups	Average	Standard deviation
Below 30	10.52 ^a	1.83
30 - 39	9.32 ^b	2.32
40 - 49	9.28 ^b	2.36
50 - 59	9.80 ^b	2.51
Above 60	11.10 ^a	1.97

Note: means with same letter as superscript are found to be homogeneous

It is found that Grama Panchayat Members belonging to the age group of below 30 are new comers elected for the first time and they are more dedicated to the activities of local level planning and governance. The members belonging to the age groups of above 60 are more experienced than the others. Their experiences in the socio political activities and local governance are very helpful.

The study establishes that the members belonging to the age group of 'below 30' and 'above 60' are more benefited with the information sources. Usefulness of information sources for the members belonging to 'above 30' and 'below 60' age groups is found to be homogenous.

4.4.4.3. ANOVA for comparing groups of different status

The elected members of Grama Panchayat are of different status such as President, Vice- President, Standing Committee Chairman and Member. The results of ANOVA for comparing groups of respondents having different status are given in Table 4.55. The F-value computed is found to be significant (4.594) at 1 per cent level. This indicates that there is significant difference in the usefulness of information among groups of respondents having different status.

Table 4.55 ANOVA 3: Comparison of the use of information sources by the Grama Panchayat Members of different status

Source of Variation	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F
Between Groups	3	75.484	25.161	4.594**
Within Groups	431	2360.479	5.477	-
Total	434	2435.963	-	-

** significant at 1 % level

LSD test was used to compare the pairs of groups. The average score and standard deviation of the score in different status groups are compared and presented in

Table 4.56. It shows that the average score for the group of Presidents is found to be the highest (23.22) and that of the group of members is the lowest (21.39). The Presidents of Grama Panchayats are seen more benefited by the information sources and the members are found to be least benefited. The Presidents are supposed to be in need of more information in their official work and hence they are more benefited.

Table 4.56 Average score and standard deviation of the score in different age groups

Status Groups	Average	Standard deviation
Presidents	23.22 ^a	2.537
Vice-presidents	21.92 ^b	3.058
Standing Committee Chairmen	22.02 ^{ab}	4.072
Members	21.39 ^b	3.727

Note: means with same letter as superscript are found to be homogeneous

It is found that there is significant difference in the usefulness of information sources among the members of different status. The Panchayat Presidents are found to be more concerned about the use of information sources than the members.

4.4.4.4. ANOVA for comparing groups with different Educational Qualifications

The groups of respondents based on different educational qualifications were compared using ANOVA and the results are presented in Table 4.57 and Table 4.58.

Table 4.57 ANOVA 4: Comparison of the use of information sources by the Grama Panchayat Members of different educational qualifications

Source of variation	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F
Between Groups	5	10.645	2.129	0.377^{ns}
Within Groups	429	2425.318	5.653	-
Total	434	2435.963	-	-

ns - non significant at 5 % level

The F-value computed (0.377) is found to be non-significant at 5 per cent level. It indicates that the members belonging to all educational groups have the same usefulness of information sources in decentralized planning. It means that educational qualifications of the members are not the only criteria for measuring the usefulness of information sources. Some other personal traits such as leadership qualities, experience, capability of co-ordination and competence are also the factors that determine the performance of the members.

Table 4.58 Average score and standard deviation of the score in different education groups

Education Groups	Average	Standard deviation
Below SSLC	21.77 ^b	4.073
SSLC	21.35 ^b	3.822
Higher Secondary	22.08 ^a	3.009
Graduates	21.37 ^b	3.663
Post Graduates	22.33 ^a	2.062
Professional Degrees	22.74 ^a	2.864

Note: means with same letter as superscript are found to be homogeneous

4.4.4.5. t-test for Comparing the Use of Information Sources between Male and Female Members

The usefulness of information sources among male and female members of Grama Panchayat was compared using t-test. The results are given in Table 4.59. The t-value is found to be non-significant (1.380) at 5 per cent level. It indicates that there is no difference between male and female members in using the information sources in decentralised planning.

Table 4.59 t-value for comparing male and female members

Gender	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value
Male	9.67	2.40	1.380^{ns}
Female	9.35	2.31	-

ns - non significant at 5 % level

The study revealed that that there is no difference in the use of information sources among the male and female members of Grama Panchayats in Kerala and they use the information sources alike.

Communication Channels of the Grama Panchayat Members

Communication becomes effective when the information is reached to the receiver in its full sense from a source through a medium. The ambiguity at the source of information will create confusion to the receiver. The hindrances or barriers in the communication process also affect the output of communication. Easy flow and exchange of information between trainers and the members and between the members and beneficiaries are primary requisites for effective local level planning. The important channels of communication that facilitate the exchange of information among the members are print media, audiovisual media, digital media and personal interaction.

4.5.1. Awareness about Communication Channels

The awareness of Grama Panchayat Members about the communication of development information in decentralised planning in Kerala is examined in this study. For this purpose, the members were asked to express their views regarding the flow of information to grassroots level through various channels. The responsibility of coordination of planning activities in the local level through participatory processes has been entrusted with the elected representatives by imparting required skills.

4.5.1.1. Awareness of Skills in Decentralised Planning

The responses of the Grama Panchayat Members about the flow of skills of decentralised planning to local level through various channels of communication have been collected and the summary is given in Table 4.60. Positive responses were indicated by nearly 44 per cent members of southern region, 40 per cent of the central region and 47 per cent of the northern region. As a whole, 44 per cent of them indicated positive responses. The negative responses are more from southern Kerala (56 per cent) than the other two regions. More than half of the Panchayat Members of Kerala (52.30 per cent) have expressed negatively.

Table 4.60 Opinion of the Grama Panchayat Members about the skills of decentralised planning imparted to local level

Regions	Whether skills of decentralised planning imparted to local level through various channels?					
	Yes		No		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Southern	47	43.93	60	56.07	107	100
Central	59	40.41	87	51.59	146	100
Northern	85	46.70	97	52.30	182	100
Total	191	43.91	244	56.09	435	100

It shows that the skills of decentralised planning have not been effectively imparted to grassroots level. The Ninth plan (1997 – 2002) in Kerala was popularly known as People's Planning Campaign. Capacity building measures have been undertaken as the part of campaign. The members were trained at KILA (Kerala Institute of Local Administration). A group of voluntary resource persons in each district were also trained. In spite of all these activities, the lack of skills and expertise among the members may be because of either their reluctance to shoulder new responsibilities or the discontinuance of the dynamic nature of capacity building programmes such as training and workshop.

It is revealed that the skills of decentralised planning in Kerala have not been effectively imparted to local level as opined by the majority of the members and this weakness of decentralised planning is predominant in southern region.

4.5.1.2. Awareness about the Difficulties in Communication

The communication skills and commitment on the part of the members are the key factors that determine the level of involvement in participatory democracy. The members have to communicate with the trainers or state faculty members in the training programme and with the public in Grama Sabha or some other groups. The opinion of Grama Panchayat Members about their difficulties in communication with the trainers and the beneficiaries was collected and the summary is given in Table 4.61. It can be seen that more than 40 per cent of the respondents in central Kerala have indicated positive response. In the other two regions, the responses are about similar (34 percent). The positive response is shown by 36.32 per cent of the members in Kerala. It shows that more than one-third of the members experience difficulties in communicating with the trainers as well as the beneficiaries.

Table 4.61 Opinion of the Grama Panchayat Members about their difficulty in communication

Regions	Whether experience any difficulty in communication with trainers and beneficiaries?					
	Yes		No		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Southern	36	33.64	71	66.36	107	100
Central	59	40.41	87	59.59	146	100
Northern	63	34.62	119	65.38	182	100
Total	158	36.32	277	63.68	435	100

It is revealed that majority of the Panchayat Members in Kerala do not experience any difficulty in communicating with the resource persons and the beneficiaries of the locality and it is found that the members of southern and northern regions are alike in this aspect. However, more than one-third of the members experience difficulties in communicating with the trainers as well as the beneficiaries.

4.5.1.3. Awareness of Barriers in Communication

The Members of Grama Panchayats should be oriented towards making them look at problems from the side of the people. This orientation has to take into consideration the differences in the profile of the elected members. In this context the elected members were asked to express their views related to the awareness about barriers in communicating development information. The Table 4.62 summarises the responses. The positive responses are expressed by less number of members (42 per cent) of south Kerala when compared to the other two regions (53 per cent each). It is seen that half of the members (50.34 per cent) in Kerala agree that there are barriers in the communication of development information in decentralised planning. The capacity building programmes among the elected representatives without considering the individual profiles and the lack of competency of the members elected through political

considerations only may be the main reasons for the lack of communication among the members.

Table 4.62 Opinion of the Grama Panchayat Members about the barriers of communication in decentralised planning

Regions	Any barriers of communication in decentralised planning?					
	Yes		No		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Southern	44	42.12	63	58.88	107	100
Central	78	53.42	68	46.58	146	100
Northern	97	53.30	85	46.70	182	100
Total	219	50.34	216	49.66	435	100

The study revealed that about half of the Members of Grama Panchayats in Kerala are aware of the presence of barriers in communication in decentralised planning which adversely affects their performance. The presence of barriers in communication is more perceived by the members of the central and northern regions of Kerala.

4.5.1.4. Differences in Communication in People's Planning Campaign and Kerala Development Programme

People's Planning Campaign (IX Plan) launched in 1996 and Kerala Development Programme (X plan) started in 2002 was different in some respects. People's planning has enhanced local capacity in understanding matters related to development and in identifying strategies and programmes to meet them. It has succeeded in improving the understanding of elected representatives to a wide range of development issues and has enhanced their capability to relate them to their local situation. Kerala Development Programme has changed the campaign mode to a phase of institutionalisation. Publication of Model Citizen's Charters in Kerala Development Programme is one of the major contributions in the area of importance of this study. The Citizen's Charters published by each Grama Panchayat to inform the people of the

locality their rights and the services rendered by Grama Panchayats. The opinion of Panchayat Members were sought to know whether they are aware of the communication processes in Ninth and Tenth Plans. The details are shown in Table 4.63.

Table 4.63 Difference in Communication in People's Planning and Kerala Development Programme

Region	Any difference in the communication of information in People's Planning and Kerala Development Programme?					
	Yes		No		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Southern	64	59.81	43	40.19	107	100
Central	100	68.49	46	31.51	146	100
Northern	121	66.48	61	33.52	182	100
Total	285	65.52	150	34.48	435	100

The distribution of respondents in the three regions shows that majority of them have indicated positive responses, which is the highest in central region (68.49 per cent), lowest in southern region (60 per cent) and equal in northern region to that of cumulative response of the members of Kerala (66 per cent). Most of the members feel that there were differences in communication of development information during the two plan periods, People's Planning Campaign and Kerala Development Programme.

It is found that majority of the Panchayat Members are aware of the differences in the communication processes in People's Planning and Kerala Development Programme. The awareness of differences in communication is more visible among the members of northern region. However, a considerable number of members are not aware of the difference of communication processes in Ninth and Tenth Plans.

4.5.2. Channels of communication

The Grama Panchayat Members of Kerala make use of different channels of communication for developing their skills in local level planning. Skills are imparted to local level mainly through print media, audiovisual media, Government publications, resource persons and digital media. The resource persons consist of the trainers, state faculty members of decentralised planning and other experts.

4.5.2.1. Preference Index to Channels of Communication

The preferences in the utilisation of these media are obtained from the respondents. Mean index computed for each channel based on all preferences of the respondents are given in Table 4.64.

Table 4.64 Preference Index to Channels of Communication in providing Skills to the Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala

Channels of communication	Preference index			
	Southern	Central	Northern	Total
Print media	4.29	4.37	4.17	4.27
Audiovisual media	3.68	3.33	3.68	3.56
Government publications	3.92	3.60	3.80	3.76
Resource persons	4.10	4.03	3.89	3.99
Digital Media	2.65	2.90	3.07	2.91
Others	0.63	0.60	0.66	0.63

The mean index for 'print media' is found to be the highest (4.27). It is followed by 'resource persons' (3.99), 'Government Publications' (3.76), 'Mass media' (3.56) and 'digital media' (2.91). The preference index to 'others' is very low (0.63). The

weighted mean computed for the preferences in the three regions and the mean ranks in the state level do not show remarkable variation.

It is revealed that print media and resource persons are the main channels of communication through which the skills and expertise of decentralised planning are imparted to local level. The Grama Panchayat Members utilise communication channels irrespective of regions.

4.5.2.2. Preferences to Channels of Communication

The distribution of the first preferences of the members to each channel is given in Table 4.65. 'Print media' have been preferred by 32 per cent each of the members of southern and central region, 29 per cent of northern region and it is 30 per cent in the whole Kerala. The first preference to 'audiovisual media' is lower in the central region (8.22 per cent). It is seen that 11.95 per cent of the members prefer 'audiovisual media' as their first preference. The use of 'Government publications' is found to be more in south Kerala (14.95 per cent) and less in north Kerala (10.99 per cent). It is seen that 13.10 per cent of Panchayat Members prefer 'Government publications'. 'Resource persons' contribute 30 per cent of the first preferences of the members in Kerala and the distribution in the three regions is found to be the same (30 per cent). The first preference to 'digital media' is shown by 13 per cent of the members through out the state. Other channels of communication are preferred only by 0.69 percent of the members.

Table 4.65 Preferences to channels of communication in providing skills to the Grama Panchayat Members

Channels of Communication	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No	%
Print media	34	31.78	46	31.51	52	28.57	132	30.34
Audiovisual media	14	13.0	12	8.22	26	14.2	52	11.95

		8				9		
Government publications	16	14.9 5	21	14.3 8	20	10.9 9	57	13.10
Resource persons	31	28.9 7	43	29.4 5	55	30.2 2	129	29.66
Digital Media	14	13.0 8	20	13.0 7	23	12.6 4	57	13.10
Others	1	0.93	2	1.37	-	-	3	0.69

‘Print media’ is found to be the first preference by more members. ‘Resource persons’ are also found to be equally important. The utilisation of e-documents on decentralised planning supplied in CD-ROMS by KILA to those members who are interested to purchase it during the training programme may be the reason for the first preference to digital media by 13 per cent of the members. Figure 4.10 shows the preferences to channels of communication in providing skills to the Grama Panchayat Members

‘Print media’ and ‘resource persons’ are found to be the major channels through which skills and expertise of local level planning are imparted to the Grama Panchayat Members. It is also found that the preferences to most of the channels of communication in the three regions are uniform.

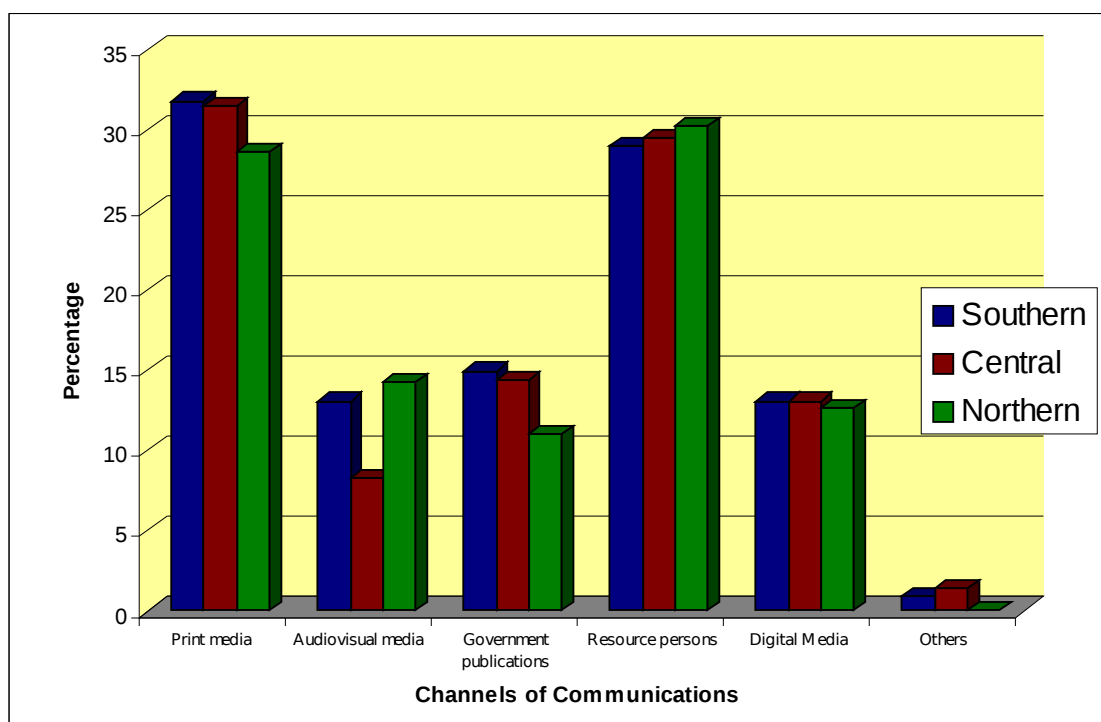


Figure 4.10. Preferences to channels of communication in providing skills to the Grama Panchayat Members

4.5.2.3. Government Publications and Skill Development of the Grama Panchayat Members

The Government publications selected for this study are three Malayalam periodicals and one English periodical, which are of importance to elected members. They are *Panchayath Raj*, *Janapadham*, *Gramabhoomi* and *Kerala Calling*. Department of Local Self Government, Department of Public Relations and State Institute of Rural Development, Government of Kerala publishes the three Malayalam periodicals respectively. *Kerala Calling* is also a publication of the Department of Public Relations, Government of Kerala.

4.5.2.4. Preference Index to Government Publications

Respondents were asked to suggest the order of preference in terms of the utilisation of four Government publications; *Panchayath Raj*; *Janapadham*, *Kerala Calling* and *Gramabhoomi*. The preference index to different Government publications is given in Table 4.66.

Table 4.66 Preference index to Government publications in providing skills to the Grama Panchayat Members

Government Publications	Preference index			
	Southern	Central	Northern	Total
<i>Panchayath Raj</i>	4.86	4.84	4.82	4.83
<i>Janapadham</i>	1.93	1.72	1.90	1.85
<i>Kerala calling</i>	1.02	1.30	0.93	1.08
<i>Gramabhoomi</i>	1.26	1.50	1.28	1.35
Others	0.62	0.53	0.47	0.53

The mean index computed for each option shows that *Panchayath Raj* has the highest means rank (4.83) followed by *Janapadham* (1.85), *Gramabhoomi* (1.35) and *Kerala Calling* (1.08). Preference index to other publications is found to be 0.53. The values of mean index to all the publications except *Kerala Calling* are similar in all the regions and this publication has the highest value of mean index in the central region (1.30). Further, the preferences in the use of each publication are computed and given in Tables 4.67 – 4.71.

4.5.2.5. Preferences to *Panchayath Raj* by the Members

The preferences in the use of *Panchayath Raj* by the Members of Grama Panchayats are shown in Table 4.67. Above 95 per cent of the respondents of all the regions of Kerala prefer to use this periodical as their first choice. It is seen that 2.53 per cent of the members have not reacted to this option. As this publication is sent freely to the members by the Department of Local Self Government, all of them should have been acquainted with this periodical.

Table 4.67 Preferences in the use of *Panchayath Raj* by the Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala

Preferences	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	102	95.33	140	95.89	173	95.05	415	95.40
2	2	1.87	1	0.68	1	0.55	4	0.92
3	-	0.00	-	0.00	2	1.10	2	0.46
4	1	0.93	1	0.68	1	0.55	3	0.69
No response	2	1.87	4	2.74	5	2.75	11	2.53
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

Panchayath Raj is found to be the one of the most popular Government publications used by large majority of Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala and the acceptance of this periodical is uniform in Kerala irrespective of regions.

4.5.2.6. Preferences to *Janapadham* by the Members

The first preference to *Janapadham* is indicated by only two per cent of the members as shown in Table 4.68. It is seen that 28 per cent and 18 per cent of the respondents expresses second and third preferences respectively and 47 per cent of the members have not indicated any preference. It shows that about half of the members are not aware of this publication or do not use the periodical for reference.

Table 4.68 Preferences in the use of *Janapadham* by the Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala

Preferences	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	3	2.80	2	1.37	3	1.65	8	1.84
2	33	30.84	31	21.23	59	32.42	123	28.28
3	17	15.89	35	23.97	25	13.74	77	17.70
4	3	2.80	5	3.42	10	5.49	18	4.14
5	2	1.87	2	1.37	-	0.00	4	0.92
No response	49	45.79	71	48.63	85	46.70	205	47.13
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

It is revealed that *Janapadham* is less popular among the Grama Panchayat Members of Kerala. However, some of the members use this periodical and the use is higher in northern and southern regions than in the central region. The number of members who are unaware of this publication is also found to be similar in all regions. This is another example for the unawareness of the members about the sources of information.

4.5.2.7. Preferences to Kerala Calling by the Members

It is very interesting to note that nobody has indicated first preference to *Kerala Calling* as can be seen from Table 4.69. However, 7 per cent and 15 percent of the members prefer this journal as second and third preferences. About 60 per cent of the respondents are not aware of this periodical or they have no facility to get them for reference. It indicates that *Kerala calling* is the least popular Government publication among the Panchayat Members. This periodical is published in English and this may be the reason for the less popularity of this periodical among the members.

Table 4.69 Preferences in the use of Kerala Calling by the Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala

Preferences	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	4	3.74	21	14.38	6	3.30	31	7.13
3	19	17.76	20	13.70	25	13.74	64	14.71
4	17	15.89	23	15.75	33	18.13	73	16.78
5	2	1.87	-	0.00	5	2.75	7	1.61
No response	65	60.75	82	56.16	113	62.09	260	59.77
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

It is found that *Kerala Calling* is the least popular Government publication among the Panchayat Members of Kerala. However, the members of central region are found to be comparatively more familiar to the periodical. It also indicates their unawareness of information sources.

4.5.2.8. Preferences to *Gramabhoomi* by the Members

Gramabhoomi, periodical covering articles on rural development and related matters that are very useful to the Panchayat Members. The preferences to this publication may be seen in Table 4.70. There are only 2 members, 1 from the central region (0.68 per cent) and 1 from the northern region (0.55 per cent) who prefers *Gramabhoomi* as the first option. Some of the members (18 per cent) have indicated second preference. Third and fourth preferences are shown by 9 per cent and 16 per cent respectively. More than half of the members (55 per cent) did not respond at all. This means even the name of this periodical is not familiar to most of the Panchayat Members.

Table 4.70 Preferences in the use of *Gramabhoomi* by the Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala

Preference	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	-	0.00	1	0.68	1	0.55	2	0.46
2	19	17.76	28	19.18	31	17.03	78	17.93
3	9	8.41	13	8.90	19	10.44	41	9.43
4	16	14.95	31	21.23	22	12.09	69	15.86
5	-	0.00	1	0.68	3	1.65	4	0.92
No response	63	58.88	72	49.32	106	58.24	241	55.40
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

Gramabhoomi, a periodical which covers articles on rural development and related matters that are very useful to the Panchayat Members is found to be less

popular among the Panchayat Members of Kerala. The members of central region show some affinity to this publication. But it is not known to the majority of the members. It also indicates their unawareness of information sources.

4.5.2.9. Other Publications

When asked to indicate their preference to any other publications that are capable of imparting knowledge and skill to them, 66 per cent of the members have not responded and no one has indicated first preference. However, 25 per cent have indicated fifth preference as shown in Table 4.71.

The members are not familiar with other significant publications like *Yojana*, *Kurukshetra*, *Journal of Rural Development*, *Journal of Local Governance* etc. in the area of rural development and governance. These publications may also be made available in the Grama Panchayats for the use of the members.

Table 4.71 Preferences in the use of Other publications by the Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala

Preference	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	8	7.48	7	4.79	4	2.20	19	4.37
3	2	1.87	2	1.37	4	2.20	8	1.84
4	3	2.80	1	0.68	6	3.30	10	2.30
5	22	20.56	42	28.77	45	24.73	109	25.06
No response	72	67.29	94	64.38	123	67.58	289	66.44
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

It is revealed that majority of the Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala also do not refer 'other Government publications' to improve their skills in local governance. In other words they are unaware of the other government information sources in the field of planning and local governance.

4.5.3. Barriers of Communication

The easy flow of development information in the vertical and horizontal direction between the members and trainers and also between the members and beneficiaries enhance the performance of the Panchayat Members and the barriers in communication will adversely affect the performance. 'Lack of ability in public speaking', 'lack of language fluency', 'complexity of technical terms' used by the trainers and experts, 'lack of formal education', 'lack of time' and 'inability of the resource persons' responsible for imparting skill and knowledge to the members are the common barriers that have been identified through informal discussion with the Panchayat Members. .

4.5.3.1. Preference index to Barriers of Communication

The respondents were asked to express their preferences to barriers of communication in their experience. The preference index to different barriers of communication was computed using weighted mean and it is shown in Table 4.72.

Table 4.72 Preference index to barriers of communication among the Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala

Barriers of communication	Preference index			
	Southern	Central	Northern	Total
Lack of ability in public speaking	2.97	2.71	3.06	2.92
Lack of language fluency	4.23	4.25	4.05	4.16
Complexity of technical terms	4.54	4.25	4.38	4.37
Lack of formal education	2.42	2.80	2.75	2.69
Lack of time	3.87	3.43	3.71	3.66
Inability of resource persons	1.95	2.49	2.57	2.39
Others	0.46	0.95	0.71	0.73

The mean index for the 'complexity of technical terms' is the highest (4.37). The other barriers in the decreasing order of the mean ranks are 'lack of language fluency' (4.16), 'lack of time' (3.66), 'lack of ability in public speaking' (2.92), 'lack of formal education' (2.69), 'inability of resource persons' (2.39) and 'others' (0.73). 'Complexity of technical terms' as a barrier of communication is more prevalent among the members of southern region (4.54) while the 'lack of language fluency' is found to be more among the members of central region. Preference index to 'lack of ability in public speaking' (2.92), 'lack of formal education' (2.69) and 'inability of resource persons' (2.39) show that these barriers are not so common among the members. 'Lack of time' with preference index 3.66 is found to be a major barrier and the presence of 'other barriers' (0.73) is not significant. The presence of barriers in communication among the members indicates their lack of ability and confidence in local planning and governance.

It is found that 'complexity of technical terms used' in the deliberations and 'lack of language fluency' are the major barriers in communication among the Grama Panchayat Members of Kerala and these barriers are common to the members irrespective of regions.

4.5.4. Use Pattern of Different Media

The Grama Panchayat Members make use of several media for achieving skills in the centralized planning. Newspapers, Government Orders, Radio, Television, Digital information, Books, Research Organisations, Persons with local knowledge and Experts are the different media of communication among the members. The use pattern of these media by the members has been ascertained based on a three-point scale. The members were asked to express their responses about the use pattern of given media by indicating any one of the options mentioned as 'Always', 'Sometimes' or 'Never'.

4.5.4.1. Use Pattern of Newspapers.

The use pattern of newspapers by the members of Grama Panchayats as shown in Table 4.73 indicate that about 88 per cent of them utilise newspapers ‘always’ and 12 per cent of them use newspapers ‘sometimes’. The use of newspapers is comparatively low in the central region (84 per cent) than the other two regions (90 per cent).

Table 4.73 Use of Newspapers by the Grama Panchayat Members

Response	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Always	96	89.72	123	84.25	163	89.56	382	87.82
Sometimes	11	10.28	23	15.75	19	10.44	53	12.18
Never	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

It is revealed that large majority of Grama Panchayat Members of Kerala use newspapers always to get the required information related to local level planning and the use of newspapers by the members is more in the southern and northern regions than the central region.

4.5.4.2. Use of Government orders

The use pattern of Government orders by the Members of Grama Panchayats is shown in Table 4.74. It is seen that 39 per cent of them use Government orders ‘always’ and 60 per cent use them ‘sometimes’. There are a few members (1.38 per cent) who ‘never’ use Government orders. The use may be related to the status of the members. Those in the status of President, Vice-President and Standing Committee Chairman are likely to use Government orders ‘always’. The members who use

Government orders 'always' are more in the central region (46.58 per cent) and those who uses 'sometimes' are more in the southern region.

Table 4.74 Use of Government Orders by the Grama Panchayat Members

Response	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Always	35	32.71	68	46.58	66	36.26	169	38.85
Sometimes	68	63.55	77	52.74	115	63.19	260	59.77
Never	4	3.74	1	0.68	1	0.55	6	1.38
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

The result of the analysis is that majority of the Members of Grama Panchayats is not regular users of Government orders emanated from the Departments of Government of Kerala. However, some of them use Government orders always depending upon the status. The members who use Government orders always are found to be more in the central region.

4.5.4.3. Use of Radio

The frequency of use of radio as a source of information by the members is shown in Table 4.75. The members who use radio 'always' are more in southern Kerala and those who use it 'sometimes' are more in the northern region. It is seen that nearly 29 per cent of the members in Kerala use radio 'always' and 62 per cent use it 'sometimes'. There are members who never listen to radio (9 per cent) for getting useful information for decentralised planning.

Table 4.75 Use of Radio by the Grama Panchayat Members

Response	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Always	44	41.12	30	20.55	52	28.57	126	28.97

Sometimes	59	55.14	99	67.81	112	61.54	270	62.07
Never	4	3.74	17	11.64	18	9.89	39	8.97
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

The study revealed that majority of Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala make use of radio to get information useful for decentralised planning and the use of radio is found to be more among the members of southern region.

4.5.4.4. Use of Television

The use of television by the Grama Panchayat Members is very extensive. The use pattern is given in Table 4.76. It shows that 61 per cent of the Members of southern region view television 'always' and the viewers of television are found to be less in central region (45 per cent) and northern region (36 per cent). Those who view television 'sometimes' are higher in northern region (62 per cent) and less in southern region (39 per cent). It is seen that 1.38 per cent of members never use television.

Table 4.76 Use of Television by the Grama Panchayat Members

Response	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Always	65	60.75	66	45.21	66	36.26	197	45.29
Sometimes	42	39.25	78	53.42	112	61.54	232	53.33
Never	-	0.00	2	1.37	4	2.20	6	1.38
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

It is revealed that majority of Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala use television occasionally for getting information related to decentralised planning and this pattern of use is shown by large majority of members of northern region. However, some of the members use television very often and this tendency is found to be more among the members of southern region of Kerala.

4.5.4.5. Use of Digital Information/Internet

The summary of responses regarding the use of digital information/internet by the members is presented in Table 4.77. The members who use this media 'always' are found to be less in the three regions; 4.11 per cent in central region, 3.74 per cent in southern region and 2.7 per cent in northern region. It is seen that 3.45 per cent of them use digital information/ internet always and 44.60 per cent use it 'sometimes' only.

Table 4.77 Use of Digital Information/Internet by the Grama Panchayat Members

Response	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Always	4	3.74	6	4.11	5	2.75	15	3.45
Sometimes	47	43.93	75	51.37	72	39.56	194	44.60
Never	56	52.34	65	44.52	105	57.69	226	51.95
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

About 52 per cent of the members never use this media for getting the required information. The unawareness of digital media and the lack of skills in using computers may be the reason for the less use of digital information.

It is found that majority of the Grama Panchayat Members never use digital information/internet to get useful information for decentralised planning due to their unawareness of electronic media and the lack of skills in using computers. Some of the members utilise digital information at times and a good number of the members of the central region show this tendency.

4.5.4.6. Use of Books by the Grama Panchayat Members

There are a number of books written in Malayalam and English in the area of decentralised planning and local governance that help the members to develop their skills in decentralised planning. The details regarding the use pattern of books by Grama Panchayat Members are presented in Table 4.78. It shows that about 44 per cent of the respondents use books ‘always’ for getting the required information and 53 per cent use books ‘sometimes’. There are members who never use books (3 per cent) to develop their skills. The non-availability of books in the specific areas and the lack of interest of the members in using the library may be the reasons for the occasional use of books. The members who use books ‘always’ are more in the central region (48 per cent) and those who use ‘sometimes’ are more in the northern region (56 per cent)

Table 4.78 Use of books by the Grama Panchayat Members

Response	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Always	47	43.93	70	47.95	74	40.66	191	43.91
Sometimes	58	54.21	71	48.63	102	56.04	231	53.10
Never	2	1.87	5	3.42	6	3.30	13	2.99
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

It is revealed that majority of Grama Panchayat Members of Kerala do not use books as a source of information regularly for developing their skills and expertise in decentralised planning. There is a decrease in the use of books by the members of central and northern regions when compared to southern region.

4.5.4.7. Dependence to Research Organisations by Grama Panchayat Members

Research organisations can contribute much in the formulation of plans and preparation of projects in different sectors of decentralised planning. The use of research organisations by the members may be seen in Table 4.79. It shows that 6.21

per cent of the members seek expert opinion from research organisations ‘always’ to get assistance, while 59 per cent depend to such organisation ‘sometimes’. It is seen that 35 per cent of the members never consult research organisations to get assistance. The unawareness of the members about the research organisations and their services may be the reason for less dependence to such agencies.

Table 4.79 Dependence to Research organisations by the Grama Panchayat Members

Response	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Always	7	6.54	7	4.79	13	7.14	27	6.21
Sometimes	70	65.42	91	62.33	96	52.75	257	59.08
Never	30	28.04	48	32.88	73	40.11	151	34.71
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

It is revealed that majority of the Grama Panchayat Members depend research organisations to get expert opinion which are useful in the different phases of decentralised planning. The members of southern and central regions show tendency to depend more on research organisations in getting expert opinion.

4.5.4.8. Dependence to Persons with Local Knowledge

Panchayat Members depend on persons with local knowledge such as senior citizens having practical experience to get their assistance in different phases of planning. The responses of the members regarding the frequency of contacts with such persons are given in Table 4.80. It shows that 62.62 per cent members of southern region, 38.36 per cent of central region and 41.76 per cent of northern region contact persons with local knowledge very often. It can be seen that 37.38 per cent of members from southern region, 59.59 per cent members from central region and 57.69 per cent of them from northern region contact persons with local knowledge

occasionally and 0.92 per cent members never contact them. In Kerala, 45.75 per cent members contact persons with local knowledge very often and 53.33 per cent of the members contact them occasionally.

Table 4.80 Dependence to Persons with Local Knowledge by the Grama Panchayat Members

Response	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Always	67	62.62	56	38.36	76	41.76	199	45.75
Sometimes	40	37.38	87	59.59	105	57.69	232	53.33
Never	-	0.00	3	2.05	1	0.55	4	0.92
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

It is found that majority of Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala depend on persons with local knowledge to get their opinion in different phases of planning.

4.5.4.9. Dependence to Experts by the Grama Panchayat Members

Professionals in particular fields, retired Government Staff and officers of the different Government Departments who reside in the locality come under the purview of experts. Their experience and expertise can be used in different phases of planning. The opinion of Panchayat Members about their dependence on the experts for getting assistance was collected. The details are shown in Table 4.81.

Table 4.81 Dependence to Experts by the Grama Panchayat Members

Response	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Always	54	50.47	48	32.88	54	29.67	156	35.86
Sometimes	52	48.60	94	64.38	119	65.38	265	60.92
Never	1	0.93	4	2.74	9	4.95	14	3.22
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

The dependence of members on experts is seen higher in the southern region (50.47 per cent) than central (32.88 per cent) and northern regions (29.67 per cent). It is seen that 35.86 per cent of the Panchayat Members 'always' contact experts for their

opinion in the area concerned. The contacts of members to experts are occasional in the central and northern regions (65 per cent). In Kerala 61 percent of the members depend experts 'sometimes' to get assistance and 3 per cent never contact experts at all.

It is found that majority of Grama Panchayat Members of Kerala contact experts to get their opinion. Some of them depend to experts very often to get their valuable suggestions in different phases of planning. The tendency to contact experts decreases gradually from southern region to northern region.

4.5.4.10. Mean Index and Rank of Channels of Communication

Mean index for each source in each region was worked out by using the weighted average with frequencies for each score as weights. A score of 2 is given to the response 'Always', 1 is given to the response 'Sometimes' and 0 is given to the response 'Never'. Based on the mean index, a rank for each source was given for priority in the use pattern. A rank of '1' is given to the source which has highest mean index, '2' to the next highest and so on.

The mean index calculated for each media and the ranks assigned to them are given in Table 4.82. The mean index computed for 'newspapers' is around 1.90 and it gets the first rank. The rank of 'persons with local knowledge' is 2 in all the regions. 'Television' and 'books' have ranks 3 and 4 respectively followed by 'Government orders' (rank 5), 'experts of the locality' (rank 6), 'radio' (rank 7), 'research organisations' (rank 8) and 'digital information/internet' (rank 9). It is also seen that the ranks of 'research organisations' (8) and digital information/internet' (9) are similar in the three regions and also in the state. The use of media in the decreasing order of ranks are: 'news papers', 'persons with local knowledge', 'television', 'books', 'Government orders', 'experts', 'radio', 'research organisations' and 'digital information/internet'.

Table 4.82 Mean index and Rank of channels of communication used by the Grama Panchayat Members

Channels of Communication	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	Mean index	Rank	Mean index	Rank	Mean index	Rank	Mean index	Rank
Newspaper	1.90	1	1.84	1	1.90	1	1.88	1
Government orders	1.29	7	1.46	2	1.36	4	1.37	5
Radio	1.37	6	1.09	7	1.19	7	1.20	7
Television	1.61	3	1.44	4	1.34	5	1.44	3
Digital information/Internet	0.51	9	0.60	9	0.45	9	0.51	9
Books	1.42	5	1.45	3	1.37	3	1.41	4
Research organisations	0.79	8	0.72	8	0.67	8	0.71	8
Persons with local knowledge	1.63	2	1.36	5	1.41	2	1.45	2
Experts	1.50	4	1.30	6	1.25	6	1.33	6

It is revealed that newspapers, persons with local knowledge and television are used by the majority of Grama Panchayat Members to get the required information. The use of books, Government orders and the dependence to local experts are found to be moderate. But, they rarely use radio and research organisation. It is also found that majority of the Grama Panchayat Members never use digital information/internet. The study revealed that the use of newspapers, digital information and dependence to research organisations by the members is uniform irrespective of regions and the use of other media is different in the three regions.

4.6. Local Knowledge in Decentralised Planning

Local knowledge has an important role to play in decentralized planning. Therefore, it would be useful to identify the sources of indigenous knowledge.

Responses regarding the need for collection and organisation of local knowledge have been obtained from the Grama Panchayat Members

4.6.1. Significance of Local Knowledge

The summary of the responses regarding the significance of local knowledge is given in Table 4.83. It shows that 98 per cent of the members of southern region, 94 per cent of them in the central region and 99 per cent of the members of northern region indicate positive responses. In the whole state, 97 per cent of the members are of the opinion that local knowledge is significant in decentralised planning. It is a fact that in the development sectors like agriculture, animal husbandry, health and culture, local knowledge is very helpful in the formulation and implementation of plans.

Table 4.83 Significance of local knowledge in decentralised planning

Region	Whether local knowledge significant in decentralised planning?					
	Yes		No		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Southern	105	98.13	2	1.87	107	100
Central	137	93.84	9	6.16	146	100
Northern	180	98.90	2	1.10	182	100
Total	422	97.01	13	2.99	435	100

It is found that large majority of Grama Panchayat Members consider local knowledge as an important source of information in decentralised planning and the opinion of the members is uniform in Kerala irrespective of regions.

4.6.2. Need for Collection of Local Knowledge

As the local knowledge is of very significance it has to be collected for future use. The main source of local knowledge is senior citizens of the locality. It is communicated orally and is not normally recorded in any form. A vast amount of traditional knowledge has been lost with the death of such resourceful persons. The opinion of the Panchayat Members regarding the collection and use of local knowledge has been obtained and presented in Table 4.84.

Table 4.84 Opinion of the Grama Panchayat Members about the collection and use of local knowledge

Region	Whether local knowledge has to be collected and used in decentralised planning?					
	Yes		No		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
South	101	94.39	6	5.61	107	100
Central	139	95.21	7	4.79	146	100
Northern	176	96.70	6	3.30	182	100
Total	416	95.63	19	4.37	435	100

It is seen that 94 per cent of the members from southern region, 95 per cent from central region and 97 per cent of them from northern region support the collection and use of local knowledge in decentralised planning. The cumulative response of the members in Kerala is 95.63 per cent. It shows that the members are aware of the importance of local knowledge and the need for collection and use in local planning.

The analysis showed that large majority of the Members of Grama Panchayats in Kerala require local knowledge for planning activities in certain development sectors and therefore it has to be collected. As far as this opinion is concerned there is a regular increase in the number of members from southern region to northern region of Kerala.

6.3. Use of Database of Local Knowledge

Local knowledge has to be collected and organised properly for future use and convenient storage devices may be used for this purpose. The respondents were asked to indicate their opinion about the usefulness of a database of local knowledge in decentralised planning. The summary of responses is presented in Table 4.85.

Table 4.85 Usefulness of database of local knowledge in decentralised planning

Region	Whether a database of local knowledge useful in decentralised planning?					
	Yes		No		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
South	89	83.18	18	16.82	107	100
Central	126	86.30	20	13.70	146	100
Northern	170	93.41	12	6.59	182	100
Total	385	88.51	50	11.49	435	100

The creation of a database of local knowledge and its use in decentralised planning is favoured by the large majority (88.51 per cent) of the members in Kerala. The region wise opinion shows that 83.18 per cent members of the southern region, 86.30 per cent members of the central region and 93.41 per cent of them from the northern region indicate positive responses. It is seen that 11.49 per cent of the respondents do not favour for the creation of database of local knowledge.

The study revealed that large majority of the members of Grama Panchayats need a database of local knowledge that can be used in decentralised planning. It is noticed that the members of northern region expressed very much for the need of a database and there is a regular increase in the number of respondents from southern to northern region.

4.6.4. Use of Local Knowledge Decentralised Planning

The 'local knowledge' has been rated by the Grama Panchayat Members on the basis of a three-point scale as shown in Table 4.86. The local knowledge is 'very useful' to 62 per cent and 'useful' to 34 per cent. Only 3.45 per cent of the members rated local knowledge as 'not useful'. About 97 per cent of the Grama Panchayat Members consider local knowledge as a source of information in decentralised planning. It is seen that 71 per cent of the members of the southern region consider it 'very useful'. The members who treat it as 'useful' are more in the northern region (39 per cent). Figure 4.11 shows the rating of local knowledge by the Grama Panchayat Members

Table 4.86 Rating of local knowledge by the Grama Panchayat Members

Response	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Very useful	76	71.03	85	58.22	109	59.89	270	62.07
Useful	24	22.43	55	37.67	71	39.01	150	34.48
Not useful	7	6.54	6	4.11	2	1.10	15	3.45
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

It is revealed that local knowledge is of great importance in decentralised planning as opined by large majority Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala. There is a regular increase of this view from southern region to northern region.

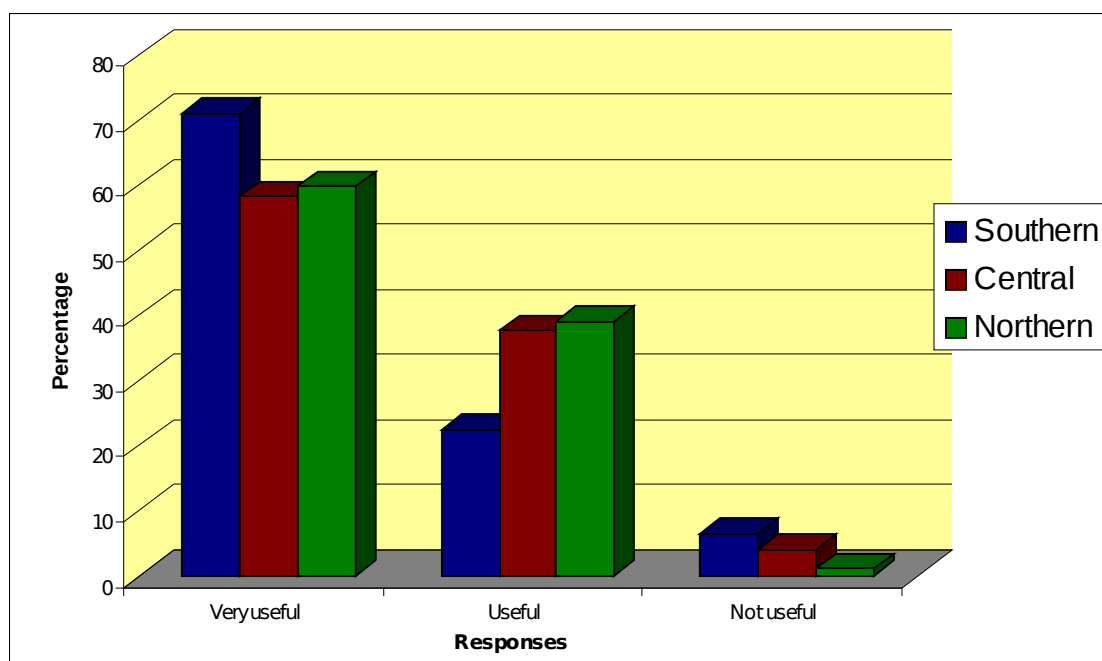


Figure 4.11. Rating of local knowledge by the Grama Panchayat Members

4.6.5. Use of Local Knowledge in Development Sectors of Decentralised Planning

The indigenous knowledge of the villages of Kerala has to be blended with scientific knowledge with the application of Information and Communication Technology. One of the main objectives of the present study is to examine the importance of the local knowledge in decentralised planning and the need to collect and organize the same for future use. The use of local knowledge by the Members of Grama Panchayats in the development sectors can be better understood from the preferences indicated by them to different development sectors.

Table 4.87 Preference index to local knowledge in development sectors

Development Sectors	Preference Index to Local knowledge			
	South	Central	North	Total
Agriculture and Irrigation	3.78	3.95	4.27	4.04
Animal husbandry and Fisheries	3.61	3.82	3.62	3.68
Health	2.86	3.25	3.04	3.06
Education	1.54	1.70	1.73	1.67
Industry	1.71	2.07	2.43	2.13

Energy and Housing	2.76	2.90	2.99	2.91
Transport	2.94	2.42	2.48	2.57
Drinking water and Sanitation	3.67	3.51	3.50	3.54
Women and Development	1.29	2.11	1.96	1.84
Welfare of SC/ST	2.02	2.42	2.38	2.31
Culture	3.50	3.32	3.69	3.52
Welfare of Weaker Sections	1.68	2.17	1.95	1.96
Resource Mobilisation	2.20	2.60	2.63	2.51

The preference index computed for local knowledge in the different development sectors of decentralised planning based on all preferences of the Grama Panchayat Members is shown in Table 4.87. The mean index in 'Agriculture and Irrigation' is found to be the highest (4.04) followed by 'Animal Husbandry and Fisheries' (3.68), 'Drinking Water and Sanitation' (3.54), 'Culture' (3.52) and 'Health' (3.06). It shows that the use of local knowledge by the members in the above development sectors is comparatively high.

It is seen that the use of local knowledge is found to be moderate in the sectors of 'Energy and Housing' (2.91), 'Transport' (2.57), 'Resource Mobilisation' (2.51), 'Welfare of SC/ST' (2.31) and 'Industry' (2.13). The lower values of mean index in the sectors of 'Welfare of Weaker Sections' (1.96), 'Women and Development' (1.84), and 'Education' (1.67) indicate the less use of local knowledge. In the sectors of 'Agriculture and Irrigation', 'Energy and Housing', 'Resource Mobilisation' and 'Industry', the use of local knowledge by the members increases from southern to northern region. In the other sectors, the use of local knowledge by the members is found to be different in different regions.

It is found that local knowledge is extensively used by the Grama Panchayat Members in majority of the development sectors of decentralised planning in Kerala. It is also revealed that the use of local knowledge in Agriculture and Irrigation,

Education, Industry, Energy and Housing and Resource Mobilisation increases from southern to northern region.

4.7. Awareness of Digital Information by the Grama Panchayat Members

The digital information is gaining much importance and popularity in the society and nobody can abstain from the use of digital media. The awareness of Grama Panchayat Members of Kerala about the digital information is examined and analysed in this study.

4.7.1. Computer Literacy of the Grama Panchayat Members

The responses of the members regarding their computer literacy have been obtained and presented in Table 4.88. Nearly 32 per cent of the members in southern region, 33 per cent in central region and 43 per cent in northern region have indicated positive responses. In Kerala as whole, 37.78 per cent of the members are computer literate and the remaining 63.22 per cent of them are computer illiterate. The computer literacy of the members is lower in the southern region and higher in the northern region. Starting of Akshaya-e-centres in some of the northern districts of Kerala with the objective of making one person from each family computer literate may be the reason for high computer literacy in northern Kerala.

Table 4.88 Computer literacy of the Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala

Region	Whether computer literate?					
	Yes		No		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
South	34	31.78	73	68.22	107	100
Central	48	32.88	98	67.12	146	100
North	78	42.86	104	57.14	182	100
Total	160	36.78	175	63.22	435	100

The study revealed that majority of the Grama Panchayat Members of Kerala are not computer literates and among them computer literates are more in northern region.

4.7.2. Use of Digital Information in the Development Sectors of Decentralised Planning

The preferences in the use of digital information in the development sectors of decentralised planning by the Grama Panchayat Members are shown in Table 4.89. It indicates that the use of digital information/internet by the members in the development sectors is very less. In 'Education' sector, few members (2.76 per cent) use digital information in the state, but it is higher in the central region (3.42 per cent). The use of digital information in the above sector by the members may be mainly for the educational purposes of their children especially for knowing the results of different examinations and admission procedures of various courses. It can be seen that 2.53 per cent of the members in Kerala use internet for getting information on 'resource mobilisation' and the percentage is higher in the central region (5.48 per cent).

The digital information is found rarely used by the members in other sectors too, such as 'Health' (1.84 per cent), 'Welfare of weaker sections' (1.38 per cent) and 'Transport' (1.15 per cent). The members of central region use digital information in limited sectors while those of the northern region use digital information in almost all sectors, though infrequently. 'Health', 'Agriculture and Irrigation', and 'Education' are the sectors in which the members have shown their preferences. The less use of digital information/internet may be due to the lack of skill in using computers.

Table 4.89 Preferences in the use of digital information by the Grama Panchayat Members in development sectors of decentralised planning

Development Sectors	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Agricultural and Irrigation	-	--	-	-	4	3.20	4	0.92

Animal husbandry and fisheries	-	-	2	1.37	2	1.10	4	0.92
Health	-	-	2	1.37	6	3.30	8	1.84
Education	2	1.87	5	3.42	5	2.75	12	2.76
Industry	-	-	2	1.37	1	0.55	3	0.69
Energy and housing	1	0.93	-	-	3	1.65	4	0.92
Transport	1	0.93	-	-	4	2.20	5	1.15
Drinking water and sanitation	1	0.93	-	-	-	-	1	0.23
Women and development	1	0.93	-	-	1	0.55	2	0.46
Welfare of SC/ST	-	-	1	0.68	2	1.10	3	0.69
Culture	1	0.93	-	-	2	1.10	3	0.69
Welfare of weaker section	2	1.87	1	0.68	3	1.65	6	1.38
Resource mobilisation	1	0.93	8	5.48	2	1.10	11	2.53

It is revealed that large majority of Grama Panchayat Members do not use digital information in different development sectors and comparatively the members of the northern region use internet/digital information more than the other two regions.

4.7.3. Chi-Square Test

Chi-Square test is employed to find out the association between two categories. If the calculated value of chi-square is greater than table value, it indicates that there is an association (dependency) between two categories and if the value is lower than the table value, the two categories are independent.

4.7.3.1. Chi-Square Value for the Association between Use Pattern of Digital Information and Educational Qualification of the Grama Panchayat Members

Chi-Square test was conducted to find out the association between the use pattern of digital information by the Grama Panchayat Members and their educational qualifications. The use pattern of the respondents of different qualification is shown in Table 4.90.

Table 4.90 Chi-Square value for the use pattern of the digital information and educational qualifications of the Grama Panchayat Members

Response	Below SSLC		SSLC		Higher Secondary		Graduation		Post Graduation		Professional Degree	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Always	2	2.15	7	3.66	1	1.52	2	3.51	2	22.22	1	5.26
Sometimes	36	38.71	76	39.79	33	50.00	31	54.39	5	55.56	13	68.42
Never	55	59.14	108	56.54	32	48.48	24	42.11	2	22.22	5	26.32
Grand Total	93	100	191	100	66	100	57	100	9	100	19	100

$$\chi^2 = 23.457$$

Here the calculated value of Chi-Square is 23.457 which is greater than the table value (18.3) at 10 degrees of freedom and also at 5 per cent level of significance. It shows that there is high association between use pattern of digital information and the educational qualification of the respondents.

The use of digital information 'always' is higher among the members who have post graduate degrees (22.22 per cent). It is followed by professionals (5.26 per cent), members with 'SSLC' (3.66 per cent), members with 'graduation' (3.51 per cent), members 'below SSLC' (2.15 per cent) and members with 'Higher Secondary' (1.52 per cent). There is a regular increase in the use of digital information 'sometimes' among the members as their qualification increases. It is seen that 38.71 per cent of the members 'below SSLC' and 39.78 per cent of them with 'SSLC' use digital information 'sometimes'. It increases to 50 per cent in the case of the members with 'Higher Secondary' and 54.39 per cent members with 'graduation', 55.56 per cent of them with 'post graduation' and 68.42 per cent of the members with 'professional degrees'. Those who 'never' use digital information are more among the group 'below SSLC' and it decreases from the members with 'SSLC' (56.54 per cent) to the

members with 'post graduation' (22.22 per cent). The members with 'professional degrees' who 'never' use digital information are 26.32 per cent.

The study revealed that the use of digital information depends on the educational qualifications of the Grama Panchayat Members. Majority of them do not use digital information due to lack of proper education.

4.7.3.2. Chi-Square Value for the Association between the Use Pattern of Digital Information and Status of Grama Panchayat Members

Chi-Square test was conducted to examine whether the use of digital information by the Grama Panchayat Members depends on their status. The details are given in Table 4.91.

Table 4.91 Chi-Square value for the use patterns of digital information and status of the Grama Panchayat Members

Response	President		Vice- president		Standing Committee Chairman		Member	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Always	3	9.38	-	0.00	4	7.84	8	2.45
Sometimes	14	43.75	16	61.54	24	47.06	140	42.94
Never	15	46.88	10	38.46	23	45.10	178	54.60
Total	32	100	26	100	51	100	326	100

$$\chi^2 = 11.866^{ns}$$

In this case, the calculated value of Chi-Square is 11.866 which is less than the table value (12.6) at 6 degrees of freedom and also at 5 per cent level of significance. It

indicates that there is no association between use pattern of digital information and the status of the respondents

It is seen that 9.38 per cent of 'Presidents' and 7.84 per cent of 'Standing Committee Chairmen' and 2.45 per cent of 'Members' use digital information 'always'. The use of digital information by 'Presidents' and 'Vice-Presidents' are found to be 43.75 per cent and 61.54 per cent respectively. 'Standing Committee Chairmen' (45.10 per cent) and 'Members' (42.94 per cent) also use digital information. There are also Members of different status who 'never' use digital information. It shows that 46.88 per cent of 'Presidents', 38.46 per cent of 'Vice-Presidents' and 45.10 per cent of 'Standing Committee Chairman' 'never' use digital information.

It is found that the majority of the members do not use digital information and there is no association between the use of digital information and the status of the Grama Panchayat Members.

4.7.3.3. Chi-Square Value for the Association between the Use Pattern of Digital Information and Gender of the Grama Panchayat Members

Chi-square test was also employed to find out the association between the use pattern of digital information and the gender of Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala. The summary is given in Table 4.92.

Table 4.92 Chi-Square value for the use patterns of digital information and gender of the Grama Panchayat Members

Response	Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%
Always	11	4.15	4	2.35
Sometimes	121	45.66	73	42.94
Never	133	50.19	93	54.71
Total	265	100	170	100

$$\chi^2 = 1.549^{ns}$$

Here also calculated value (1.549) was found to be non significant indicating that there is no association in the use pattern of digital information and gender of the respondents. This indicates that the use pattern of the digital information is more or less same by the male and female members

It is seen that 4.15 per cent of the male members and 2.35 per cent of the female members use digital information 'always' and 45.66 per cent of male members and 42.94 per cent of female members use digital information 'sometimes'. The members who 'never' use digital information are found to be 50.19 per cent among male and 54.71 per cent among female members.

It is revealed that there is no association between the use of digital information and gender of the Grama Panchayat Members

4.7.4. Application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Local Governance

The Panchayat Members were requested to indicate their opinion about the application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in local governance. The responses are presented in Table 4.93.

Table 4.93 Opinion of the Grama Panchayat Members about the application of ICT in Local Governance

Region	Whether Information and Communication Technology has to be used in local governance?					
	Yes		No		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Southern	99	92.52	8	7.48	107	100
Central	139	95.21	7	4.79	146	100
Northern	170	93.41	12	6.59	182	100
Total	408	93.79	27	6.21	435	100

It is seen that large majority of the members of all regions support the application of ICT in local governance. The members of central region (95.21 per cent)

are more for the application of ICT in local governance than those of the southern region (92.52 per cent) and northern region (93.41 per cent). Nearly 94 per cent of the members in Kerala are in favour of the application of ICT in local planning and governance. Even though majority of the members are computer illiterates and not aware of the digital information sources, they welcome the application of ICT in local governance so as to have better access to information.

The analysis showed that large majority of Grama Panchayat Members favour the application of ICT in local planning and governance as the existing information support is inadequate. The opinion of the members about the application of the ICT in local governance is independent of the regions of Kerala.

4.7.5. Digital Local Government Information Centre (DLGIC)

The responses about the necessity of Digital Local Government Information Centre to support decentralised planning and local governance in Kerala were collected and the summary is presented in Table 4.94. It shows that 90.65 per cent of the members of southern region, 90.41 per cent of members of central region and 89 per cent from the northern region indicated positive responses. It means that majority of Panchayat Members are in favour of the establishment of DLGIC in Kerala. The percentage of respondents is found to be decreasing from southern to northern region.

Table 4.94 Necessity of Digital Local Government Information Centre in Kerala

Region	Whether Digital Local Government Information Centre is necessary for Local Bodies in Kerala?					
	Yes		No		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Southern	97	90.65	10	9.35	107	100
Central	132	90.41	14	9.59	146	100
Northern	162	89.01	20	10.99	182	100
Total	391	89.89	44	10.11	435	100

4.7.6. Institutions to act as Digital Local Government Information Centre

The opinion of Grama Panchayat Members was obtained regarding their preferences to institutions that can act as DLGIC in Kerala. The summary of the responses is presented in Table 4.95. Such an institution will act as the nodal centre and online information support can be provided to the members as well as the public through the information centres at the ward/ Grama Panchayat level.

The analysis shows that more than half of the members (50.80 per cent) prefer Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA) as the Digital Local Government Information Centre. The preference of the members to KILA decreases from south (58.88 per cent) to north (47.25 per cent). Information Kerala Mission (IKM) is preferred only by 8.74 per cent of the members and the region wise preferences are 7.48 per cent (south), 10.27 per cent (central) and 8.24 per cent (northern) respectively. Kerala State Library Council is preferred by less number of members (6.67 per cent); 2.80 per cent in the south, 6.16 per cent in the central and 9.34 per cent in the north Kerala. Akshaya-e-centres are preferred by 31 per cent of the members. The region wise preferences are 25.23 per cent in southern region, 31.51 per cent in central region and 34.07 per cent in northern region. It is seen that 2.53 per cent of the members have not indicated any option.

Table 4.95 Institutions preferred by the Grama Panchayat Members to act as Digital Local Government Information Centre

Institution	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
KILA	63	58.88	72	49.32	86	47.25	221	50.80
IKM	8	7.48	15	10.27	15	8.24	38	8.74
Kerala State Library Council	3	2.80	9	6.16	17	9.34	29	6.67
Akshaya-e-centres	27	25.23	46	31.51	62	34.07	135	31.03

Others	1	0.93	-	0.00	-	0.00	1	0.23
No opinion	5	4.67	4	2.74	2	1.10	11	2.53
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

Figure 4.12 shows the institutions preferred by the Grama Panchayat Members to act as Digital Local Government Information Centre

The study revealed that majority of the members prefer to establish Digital Local Government Information Centre at KILA and the acceptance of KILA is found decreased from south to north.

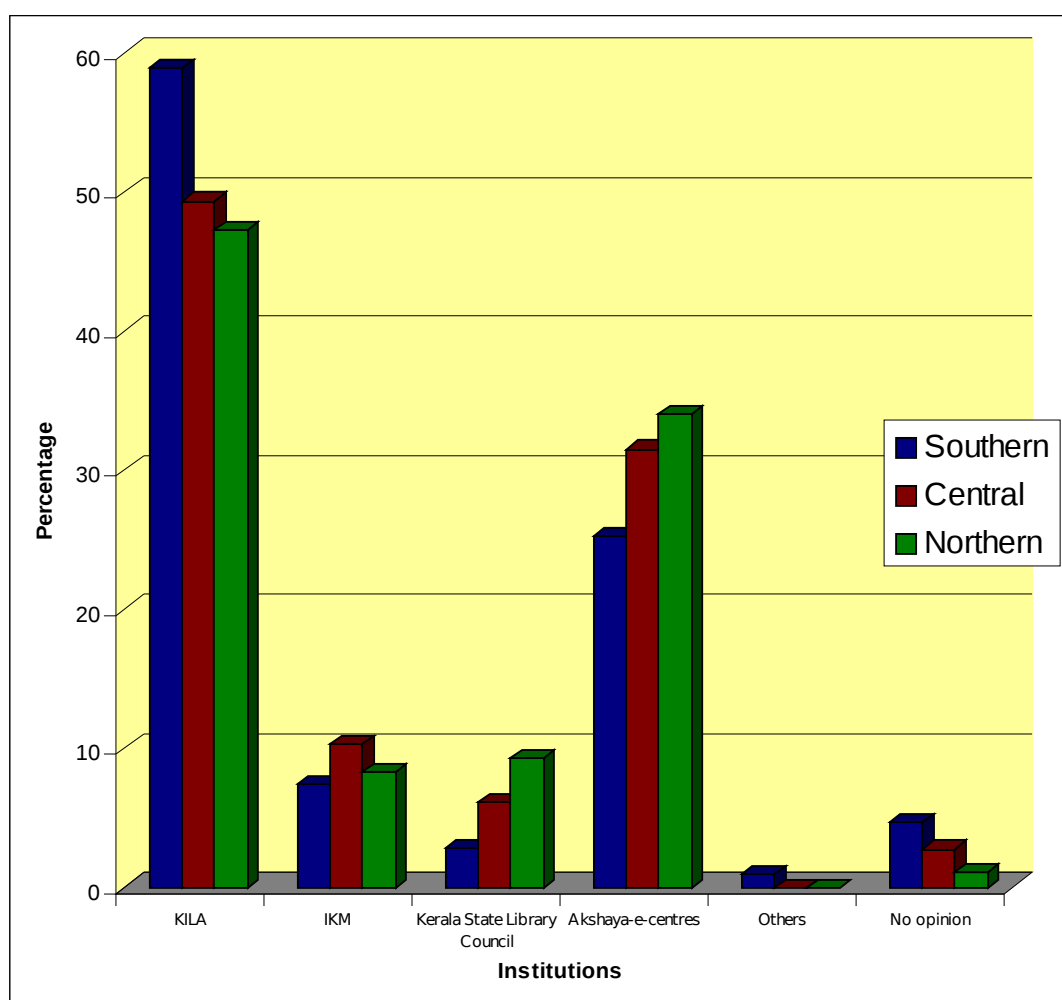


Figure 4.12. Institutions preferred by the Grama Panchayat Members to act as Digital Local Government Information Centre

4.7.7. Online Information Services through Networking of Local Bodies

The application of ICT in local level planning and governance facilitates the computerisation and networking of local bodies in Kerala. The necessity of online information services through the networking of local bodies has been pointed out by the members. Their responses are summarised in Table 4.96. About 87 per cent members of the southern region, 89 per cent of them from the central region and 85 per cent from the northern region need the facility of online services through the networking of local bodies. In this case also, the members of central region are more for computerisation and networking of local bodies than the other two regions.

Table 4.96 Opinion of the Grama Panchayat Members about the facility for online services through networking of Local Bodies

Region	Whether facility for online information services provided through the networking of Local Bodies?					
	Yes		No		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Southern	93	86.92	14	13.08	107	100
Central	130	89.04	16	10.96	146	100
Northern	154	84.62	28	15.38	182	100
Total	377	86.67	58	13.33	435	100

It is revealed that large majority of Grama Panchayat Members support the computerization and networking of local bodies in Kerala in order to overcome the existing inadequacies of information support to decentralised planning. It is also found that the members of central region of Kerala are more in favour of the computerisation and networking of local bodies.

4.8. Information Support to Decentralised Planning in Kerala.

The information support and expertise available for centralised planning in Kerala has been very strong. The devolution of powers and plan fund to grassroots level has made the Local Self Governments more powerful. It is examined whether the knowledge and expertise of decentralised planning has been devolved into the local level along with the devolution of powers and money.

4.8.1. Devolution of Knowledge to Grassroots Level

The opinion of Panchayat Members about the devolution of knowledge of decentralised planning to grassroots level was obtained and it is summarised in Table 4.97. When asked whether t

he knowledge of decentralised planning has to be devolved to grassroots level along with devolution of powers, nearly 93 per cent of the members answered positively. It means that knowledge of decentralised planning has to be devolved to local level along with devolution of powers. It is seen that 89.72 per cent of the members of southern region, 93.15 per cent and 94.51 per cent each of them in the central and northern regions expressed positive responses. The members with positive responses are more from the northern region than the other two regions.

Table 4.97 Opinion of the Grama Panchayat Members about the devolution of knowledge to grassroots level

Region	Whether the knowledge of decentralised planning has to be devolved to grassroots level along with devolution of powers?					
	Yes		No		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Southern	96	89.72	11	10.28	107	100
Central	136	93.15	10	6.85	146	100
Northern	172	94.51	10	5.49	182	100
Total	404	92.87	31	7.13	435	100

The study revealed that large majority of Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala needs knowledge of decentralised planning to be devolved to local level along with devolution of powers and more members of the northern region favour this opinion.

4.8.2. Knowledge of Decentralised Planning Imparted to Local Level

The members were also asked whether the knowledge of decentralised planning has been presently imparted to local level. The summary of responses presented in Table 4.98 shows that 50.47 per cent of the Panchayat Members of southern region, 45.21 per cent of the members of the central region and 37.91 per cent of them from the northern region show positive responses. As a whole, 43.45 per cent of the respondents are of the opinion that knowledge has been imparted to grassroots level. The negative responses by the majority (56.55 per cent) of the members indicate that knowledge of decentralised planning has not been really imparted to local level. More members of the northern region (62.09 per cent) have this feeling.

Table 4.98 Opinion of the Grama Panchayat Members about the knowledge imparted to local level

Region	Whether knowledge of decentralised planning has been imparted to local level?					
	Yes		No		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Southern	54	50.47	53	49.53	107	100
Central	66	45.21	80	54.79	146	100
Northern	69	37.91	113	62.09	182	100
Total	189	43.45	246	56.55	435	100

The analysis showed that knowledge of decentralised planning has not been fully imparted to local level and more members of northern region have this view.

4.8.3. Role of Local Libraries in Imparting Knowledge of Decentralised Planning

Libraries and Information Centres do provide services to different categories of people in the society to meet their information needs. The Grama Panchayat Members rate the usefulness of services provided by the libraries of their locality as shown in Table 4.99.

Table 4.99 Role of local libraries in imparting knowledge of decentralised planning to the Grama Panchayat Members

Response	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Very useful	34	31.78	27	18.49	27	14.84	88	20.23
Useful	27	25.23	42	28.77	43	23.63	112	27.75
Not useful	46	42.99	77	52.74	112	61.54	235	54.02
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

The libraries of their locality are 'very useful' for providing necessary information in decentralised planning according to 20 per cent of the members and are 'useful' to 27.75 per cent of them. But, majority of the members (54 per cent) consider that the services provided by the libraries are 'not useful' in decentralised planning. Those who rated the library services as 'not useful' are more in the northern region (61.54 per cent) than central region (52.74 per cent) and southern region (43 per cent).

It is revealed that the libraries of the locality of the respondents are partially useful in imparting knowledge of decentralised planning to the members. It means that the local libraries are not fully equipped with resources for providing information support to the Grama Panchayat Members in the different phases of local planning and the role of local libraries in imparting knowledge of decentralised planning to the local level is not significant.

4.8.4. Need for Community Information Centre (CIC) in the Villages of Kerala

At present there is no provision for the dissemination of development information to the members of Grama Panchayats or to the public in the villages of

Kerala. Therefore the necessity of establishing Community Information Centres (CICs) in the Grama Panchayats is examined. The responses of the Panchayat Members on this matter is summarised in Table 4.100. It shows that large majority (94 per cent) of the respondents need CICs to be established in the villages to provide development information. It is seen that 93.40 per cent members of southern region, 97.95 per cent members of central region and 91.21 per cent of them from the northern region support the necessity of CICs.

Table 4.100 Opinion of Grama Panchayat Members about the need for Community Information Centre

Region	Whether Community Information Centre needed in the villages to provide development information?					
	Yes		No		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Southern	100	93.40	7	6.60	107	100
Central	143	97.95	3	2.05	146	100
Northern	166	91.21	16	8.79	182	100
Total	409	94.02	26	5.98	435	100

It is found that large majority of Grama Panchayat Members need Community Information Centres to be established in the villages to provide development Information and almost all members of the central region support this view.

4.8.4.1. Community Information Centre in the Local Library

Opinion of the respondents in respect of starting of CICs in the local libraries was collected and the summary is given in Table 4.101.

Table 4.101 Opinion of the Grama Panchayat Members about establishing Community Information Centre in the local libraries

Region	Whether the Community Information Centre established in the local library?					
	Yes		No		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Southern	73	68.22	34	31.78	107	100
Central	91	62.33	55	37.67	146	100
Northern	140	76.92	42	23.08	182	100
Total	304	69.89	131	30.11	435	100

It is seen that nearly 70 per cent of the Panchayat Members need the CICs to be started in the local library. More members from northern region (76.92 per cent) expressed this view. However a sizable number of members (30.11 per cent) are not in favour of establishing CICs in the local libraries.

It is found that majority of Grama Panchayat Members favour of starting CICs in local libraries and more of them are from the northern region.

4.8.4.2. Information Services to the Public

Information services are to be provided not only to Grama Panchayat Members but also to the general public of the society. Who is responsible for providing such a service? The region wise distribution of the members with their first options for providing information services to the public is given in Table 4.102. It shows that 65.42 per cent of the members of southern region, 62.33 per cent of the central region and 58.79 per cent of them of northern region support the starting of new CICs as their first option. More than 25 per cent of them favour the libraries to act as Information Centres, 8 per cent believe that information has to be obtained from the government offices and a very few (1.61 per cent) suggested to continue the present system.

Table 4.102 Distribution of the Grama Panchayat Members according to their choice to provide information services to the public

Response	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Establishment of Community Information Centre	70	65.42	91	62.33	107	58.79	268	61.61
Make the Libraries as an Information Centre also	23	21.50	28	19.18	59	32.42	110	25.29
From the Government Offices	8	7.48	19	13.01	9	4.95	38	8.28
Continue present system	4	3.74	2	1.37	1	0.55	7	1.61
Others	1	0.93	2	1.37	2	1.10	5	1.15
No opinion	1	0.93	4	2.74	4	2.20	9	2.07
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

It is revealed that there is an urge to establish Community Information Centres in the Grama Panchayats of Kerala as suggested by majority of the members to provide information services to the public. More members from southern region are of this opinion.

4.8.4.3. Information Services to the Grama Panchayat Members

Timely access to the required information is possible only through a system capable of collecting, organizing and retrieving information. The members were asked to indicate their first choice among the given options. As can be seen from Table 4.103 majority of members (56.32 per cent) proposed to 'strengthen the training programme'. It is seen that 39 per cent of them are of the opinion of networking the Panchayat Raj Institutions of Kerala and thus providing online information support. For a few members (2.76 per cent) the present system has to be continued and only some (1.38 per cent) of the members have not indicated any response. More members from the central region (47.26 per cent) prefer the networking of Panchayat Raj Institutions and more members from the northern region (62.64 per cent) favour 'strengthening of training programmes'.

Table 4.103 Distribution of the Grama Panchayat Members according to their first choice to provide information support

Response	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Form a network of Panchayath Raj Institutions	38	35.51	69	47.26	62	34.07	169	38.85
Strengthen the training programme	60	56.07	71	48.63	114	62.64	245	56.32
Continue the present system	6	5.61	2	1.37	4	2.20	12	2.76
Others	2	1.87	-	0.00	1	0.55	3	0.69
No opinion	1	0.93	4	2.74	1	0.55	6	1.38
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

It is found that there is a need to strengthen the training programmes for the members of Grama Panchayats in Kerala as indicated by majority of the members and it is also necessary to provide networking of Grama Panchayats.

4.8.5. Necessity of Information Base

A strong information base is essential for any development programme and an efficient information system is a part of an efficient economic system. The respondents were asked to indicate their opinion about the essentiality of information base and the responses are summarised in Table 4.104. It shows that nearly 88 per cent of the members of the southern region, 90 per cent of them from the central region and 91 per cent from the northern region indicate positive response. The responses from large majority (90 per cent) of the Panchayat members of Kerala show that a strong information base is essential for local planning and governance. The number of members expressed this opinion increases from south to north.

Table 4.104 Opinion of the Grama Panchayat about the information base of decentralised planning

Region	Whether a strong information base is essential for local planning and governance?					
	Yes		No		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Southern	94	87.85	13	12.15	107	100
Central	131	89.73	15	10.27	146	100
Northern	165	90.66	17	9.34	182	100
Total	390	89.66	45	10.34	435	100

The analysis showed that a strong information base is essential in Kerala for local planning and governance as opined by the large majority of Grama Panchayat Members and there is an increase in the number of the members who put across this view from south to north.

4.8.5.1. Information Base for Decentralised Planning in Kerala

When asked whether the present information base of Kerala is capable of supporting decentralised planning, majority of them responded negatively. The details are shown in Table 4.105. About 50 per cent of the members from southern and northern regions and 48 per cent from central region expressed positive responses. It means that the information base of Kerala is not capable of supporting decentralised planning.

Table 4.105 Opinion of the Grama Panchayat Members about the capability of information base in Kerala

Region	Whether the information base Kerala capable of supporting decentralised planning?					
	Yes		No		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No	100
Southern	53	49.53	54	50.47	107	100
Central	64	43.84	82	56.16	146	100
Northern	90	49.45	92	50.55	182	100
Total	207	47.59	228	52.41	435	100

It is revealed that the present information base of Kerala is not capable of supporting decentralised planning as indicated by majority of Grama Panchayat Members and more members from the central region are of this view.

4.8.5.2. Status of Information Base in Kerala

The respondents were asked to express their opinion about the information base of decentralised planning in Kerala and the responses are summarised in Table 4.106.

Table 4.106 Distribution of the Grama Panchayat Members according to their opinion about the information base of the decentralized planning in Kerala

Response	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Not necessary	2	1.87	2	1.37	2	1.10	6	1.38
Very weak	55	51.40	78	53.42	71	39.01	204	46.90
Strong	34	31.78	50	34.25	98	53.85	182	41.84
Very strong	10	9.35	9	6.16	4	2.20	23	5.29
No Opinion	6	5.61	7	4.79	7	3.85	20	4.60
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

The information base of decentralised planning in Kerala is found to be 'very weak' as indicated by considerable number (47 per cent) of respondents. On the other hand 42 per cent of members consider the information base as 'strong'. Strangely 5 per cent indicated that it is 'very strong'. For 1.38 per cent of the members the information base is 'not necessary' and 4.60 per cent have not responded at all as given in Table 4.106. Figure 4.13 shows the distribution of the Grama Panchayat Members according to their opinion about the information base of the decentralized planning in Kerala

It is found that the information base of decentralised planning in Kerala is weak. Majority of the members of central region consider it as very weak, on the other hand majority of the members of northern region consider it as strong.

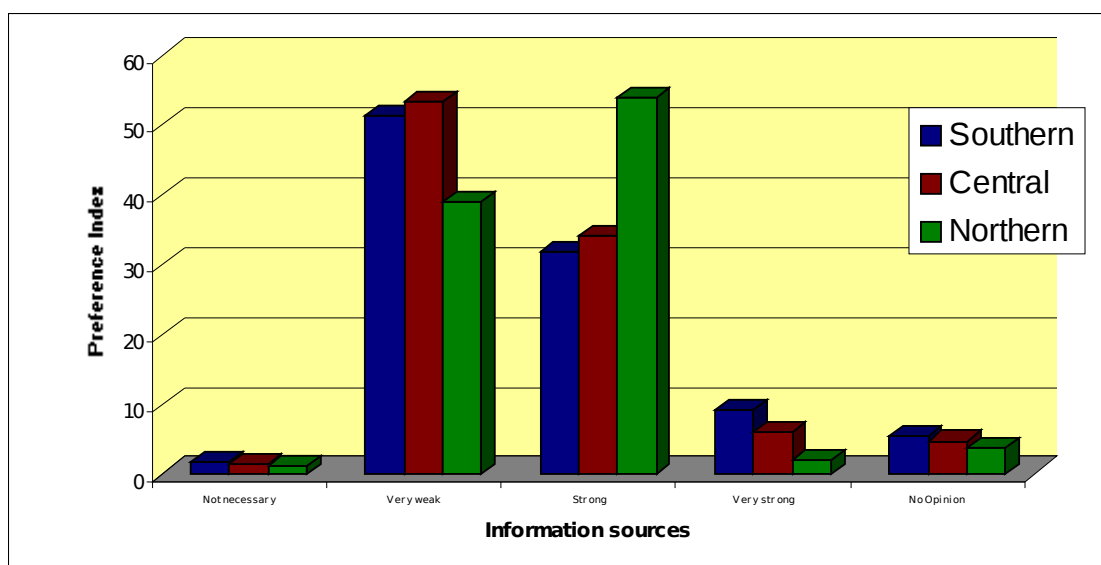


Figure 4.13. Distribution of the Grama Panchayat Members according to their opinion about the information base of the decentralized planning in Kerala

4.9. Capability Building among the of Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala

The Grama Panchayat Members of Kerala are of different educational levels from primary education to post graduate and professional education. The formal education of the members is not the only factor that decides their capability or performance. The involvement in sociopolitical activities and their previous experiences in local governance are also important.

4.9.1. Experience and Capability of Grama Panchayat Members

The opinion of Grama Panchayat Members about their capability development through the participation in local planning was collected and summarised in Table 4.107. It is seen that 88.79 per cent of the members of southern region, 95.89 per cent of them from the central region and 95 per cent from the northern region indicate positive response. It means that the capability of Panchayat Members has developed after their participation in decentralised planning. Therefore, the experience of the members in local governance plays an important role in developing their capacity as expressed by 93.79 per cent of the members in Kerala.

**Table 4.107 Opinion of Grama Panchayat Members
about their experience and capability**

Region	Whether capability developed after participating in decentralised planning?					
	Yes		No		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Southern	95	88.79	12	11.21	107	100
Central	140	95.89	6	4.11	146	100
Northern	173	95.05	9	4.95	182	100
Total	408	93.79	27	6.21	435	100

It is found that the experience of the members in participatory planning has developed their capability and more members from central region are of this view.

4.9.2. Formal Education and Capability of Grama Panchayat Members

When asked whether there is any relationship between formal education and capability of the Grama Panchayat Members, majority of them indicated positive response as shown in Table 4.108. Nearly 94 per cent of the members in Kerala agree that their capability is related with formal education. More number of the members of central region (80.14 per cent) than southern region (68.22 per cent) and northern region (74.18 per cent) expressed this view.

**Table 4.108 Opinion of the Grama Panchayat Members
about their formal education and capability**

Region	Whether capability of the members related with formal education?					
	Yes		No		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Southern	73	68.22	34	31.78	107	100
Central	117	80.14	29	19.86	146	100
Northern	135	74.18	47	25.82	182	100
Total	325	93.79	110	6.21	435	100

It is revealed that the capability of Grama Panchayat Members is related with the formal education as opined by large majority of the members and more members of the central region favour this view.

4.9.3. Academic Qualifications and Capability of Grama Panchayat Members

It was also enquired whether the capability of the members is related with the academic qualifications. About 53 per cent members in Kerala are of the opinion that the capability is influenced by academic qualifications (Table 4.109). More members of central region showed positive response (63.70 per cent) than southern (42.99) and northern region (49.45 per cent)

Table 4.109 Opinion of the Grama Panchayat Members about their academic qualifications and Capability

Region	Whether capability of the members related with academic qualifications?					
	Yes		No		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Southern	46	42.99	61	57.01	107	100
Central	93	63.70	53	36.30	146	100
Northern	90	49.45	92	50.55	182	100
Total	229	52.60	206	47.40	435	100

Majority of the members are of the view that their capability is influenced by academic qualifications.

4.9.4. Rating of Knowledge Acquired through Formal Education

Distribution of Grama Panchayats Members in rating the knowledge acquired through formal education is given in Table 4.110. The knowledge acquired is 'very useful' in local level planning for 43 per cent of the members. But majority of them (53 per cent) treat it as 'useful' only. It is 'not useful' for 4 per cent of the respondents. Those who find it 'very useful' are more in the central region (45.21 per cent) and less in northern region (40.11 per cent). It is also seen that 57.69 per cent of the members

consider knowledge acquired through formal education as 'useful' and it is less in central region (50 per cent0).

Table 4.110 Distribution of the Grama Panchayat Members in rating the knowledge acquired through formal education

Response	Southern		Central		Northern		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Very useful	48	44.86	66	45.21	73	40.11	187	42.99
Useful	53	49.53	73	50.00	105	57.69	231	53.10
Not useful	6	5.61	7	4.79	4	2.20	17	3.91
Grand Total	107	100	146	100	182	100	435	100

The study revealed that the knowledge acquired through formal education is useful to majority of members and more members from northern region favour this opinion.

4.9.5. Chi- square Test

Chi-Square test is conducted to find out the association of the use pattern of Government orders by different category of the members formed by status, gender and educational qualifications. The Panchayat Members are supposed to have capacity to understand and interpret Government orders.

4.9.5.1. Chi-Square Value for the Use Pattern of Government Orders and Status of the Grama Panchayat Members

The dependency of the use pattern of the Government orders and the status of the respondents was measured by chi- square test based on the summary given in the Table 4.111. Here the calculated value of Chi-Square is 26.103 which is greater than the table value (12.6) at 6 degrees of freedom and also at 5 per cent level of

significance. This indicates that there is high association between use pattern of government order and the status of the respondents.

Table 4.111 Chi-Square value for the use pattern of Government orders and status of the Grama Panchayat Members

Response	President		Vice- President		Standing Committee Chairman		Member	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Always	22	68.75	12	46.15	29	56.86	106	32.52
Sometimes	10	31.25	14	53.85	22	43.14	214	65.64
Never	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	1.84
Total	32	100	26	100	51	100	326	100

$$\chi^2 = 26.103^{**}$$

It can be seen that 32.52 per cent of 'Members' are using the Government orders 'Always' and 65.64 per cent are using 'Sometimes' and about 2 per cent are not using the Government orders. But all other members in the status of President (68.75) Vice-President (46.15) and Standing Committee Chairman (56.86) are found to be using Government orders 'Always'. The rest of them use Government orders 'Sometimes'. It shows that the members in the status of President, Vice-President and Standing Committee Chairman use Government orders very frequently and thus their capability is increased.

There is high association between use pattern of government order and the status of the respondents. It is found that Grama Panchayat Members in higher status use Government orders regularly in order to develop their capacity and the members are not using these orders regularly.

4.9.5.2. Chi-Square Value for the use pattern of Government Orders and Gender of the Members

The test is conducted to know whether the use pattern of Government orders have any relationship with the gender of the respondents. Here the calculated value of

Chi-Square is 7.014 which is greater than the table value (5.99) at 2 degrees of freedom and also at 5 per cent level of significance. This indicates that there is high association between use pattern of government orders and the gender of the respondents which implies that there is significant variation in the use pattern of Government orders among male and female members. When 42 per cent male members use Government orders 'Always', the use among female members is 34 per cent. More female members (63 per cent) use Government orders 'sometimes' than the male members (57.74 per cent). It is seen that nearly 3 per cent of female members are not using government orders at all.

Table No 4. 112 Chi-Square value for the use pattern of Government order and gender of the Grama Panchayat Members

Response	Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%
Always	111	41.89	58	34.12
Sometimes	153	57.74	107	62.94
Never	1	0.38	5	2.94
Total	265	100	170	100

$\chi^2 = 7.014^{**}$ **** significant**

It is revealed that the use of Government orders is significantly higher among male members than the female members.

4.9.5.3. Chi-Square value for the Use Pattern of Government Orders and Educational Qualifications of the Members

Chi-Square test is done to find out whether the use pattern of Government orders depends on the educational qualifications of the members. In this case, the calculated value of Chi-Square is 14.467 which is less than the table value (18.3) at 10 degrees of freedom and also at 5 per cent level of significance. This indicates that there is no association between use pattern of government order and the educational qualifications of the respondents.

Table No. 4.113 Chi-Square value for the use pattern of government orders and educational qualifications of the Grama Panchayat Members

Response	Below SSLC		SSLC		Higher Secondary		Graduation		Post Graduation		Professional Degree	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Always	32	34.41	71	37.17	31	46.97	19	33.33	5	55.56	11	57.89
Sometimes	60	64.52	118	61.78	32	48.48	38	66.67	4	44.44	8	42.11
Never	1	1.08	2	1.05	3	4.55	-	0.00	-	0.00	-	0.00
Grand Total	93	100	191	100	66	100	57	100	9	100	19	100

$\chi^2 = 14.467^{ns}$ ns = Non significant

It is seen that the Panchayat Members make use of government orders irrespective of their educational qualifications. Members with post graduation (55.56 per cent) and professional degree holders (57.89 per cent) use Government orders regularly. The members with higher secondary education use government orders 'Always' (46.97 per cent) than that of graduates (33.33 per cent).

It is revealed that the capability of Panchayat Members in local governance has no relation with their educational qualifications.

4.9.6. Suggestions of the Grama Panchayat Members about the Devolution of knowledge to Grassroots level

The Grama Panchayat Members were asked to provide their suggestions against the open-ended question about the devolution of knowledge to grassroots level for the smooth functioning of local planning and governance. A number of suggestions have been received and they are categorised and analysed. A total of 415 suggestions were received from the members. These suggestions were grouped into five key categories; Strengthening training programme, capability building programme, Strengthening Grama Sabhas, Information system for local governance and Miscellaneous. The key categories and the number of suggestions are given in Table 4.114.

Table 4.114 Key categories of suggestions of Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala

Sl.No.	Category	No.	%
1	Strengthening Training Programmes	80	19.27
	Conduct training programme at block level	40	50.00
	Engage most competent trainers	15	18.75
	Make training a continuous process	15	18.75
	Give training to panchayat staff	10	8.00
2	Capability Building Programmes	142	34.21
	Continuing education programme in local governance	40	28.16
	Computer training for the members	30	21.26
	Make available publications	22	15.49
	Programmes in television and radio on local governance	20	14.08
	Seminars, Discussions etc. on special topics	18	12.67
	Conduct classes to the members by professionals	12	8.45
3	Strengthening of Grama Sabhas	72	17.34
	Participation of the middle class in Grama Sabhas	28	38.88
	Ensure the participation of all voters in Grama Sabhas	20	27.77
	Participation of employees	14	19.44
	Classes by experts in Grama Sabhas	10	7.20
4	Information System for Local Governance	92	22.16
	Establish Village Information Centre	30	32.60
	Computerisation and networking of Grama Panchayats	23	25.00
	Information system for decentralised planning	20	21.73
	Facility for online information support	14	14.21
	Wireless networking of Grama Panchayats	5	5.43
5	Miscellaneous	29	6.98
	Classes to the members of 'Kudumbashree'	12	41.37
	Enquiry counter in Grama Panchayat Office	9	31.03
	Strengthen the libraries of the village	8	27.58

Of the 415 suggestions, 19.27 per cent were related to strengthening of training programmes. In this category, 40 suggestions (50 per cent) were for conducting training

programmes at block level. It is seen that 15 members (18.75 per cent) suggested for engaging most competent trainers, another 15 members appealed to make training programme a continuous process and 8 per cent of them suggested to give training to Panchayat staff also.

Suggestions related to capability building are indicated by 142 members (34.21 per cent). Comments of 40 members (28.16 per cent) are related to the need for continuing education programmes in local governance. The need for computer training to Grama Panchayat Members was proposed by 30 members (21.26 per cent) and 22 members (15.49 per cent) needed provision of reference materials and other publications. Special programmes in television and radio on local governance are suggested by 20 members (14.08 per cent). Conducting of seminars and discussions on special topics in decentralised planning at block level and classes to the members by professionals in different fields are suggested by 12.67 per cent and 8.45 per cent members respectively. It is seen that 72 (17.34 per cent) suggestions are related to strengthening of Grama Sabha. The participation of the middle class people in Grama Sabha has to be ensured as suggested by 28 members (38.88 per cent) and participation of all voters is proposed by 27.77 per cent members. The employees of the ward are to be participated as expressed by 14 members (19.44 per cent). Of the 415 suggestions, 92 members (22.16 per cent) proposed the need of an information system for local governance: 30 members (32.60 per cent) need Village Information Centres, 25 per cent proposed computerisation and networking of Grama Panchayats, 21.73 per cent suggested to establish an Information System with State, District, Block and Panchayat Information Centres. Facility for online information support was suggested by 15.21 per cent members and wireless networking of Grama Panchayats is proposed by 5.43 per cent. It is seen that 29 (6.98 per cent) suggestions are of general nature, out of these 9 members (31.03 per cent) wanted conducting of classes to for Kudumbashree

members, 12 (41.37 per cent) suggestions are related to introducing enquiry counter in Panchayat offices and 27.58 per cent members wanted to strengthen the libraries of the village. It is significant to note that almost all the above suggestions indicated by Panchayat Members are helpful to impart knowledge to grassroots level.

It is found that the members need local level training programmes including training in the use of computers. They also expressed the need for Community Information Centre in each village, computerisation and networking of Grama Panchayats and an Information System for decentralised planning in Kerala. The members also suggested ensuring the participation of middle class especially the educated and employed people in the Grama Sabhas so as to have lively and effective discussions related to the development of the locality.

4.10. Conclusion

The study establishes that the information requirements of the Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala are not properly met. The information sources are scattered and there should be some arrangement to bring all the information sources and services required by the members beneath one roof. Majority of the members indicated the need for the collection, organisation and dissemination of local knowledge. They indicated that the information base of decentralised planning in Kerala has to be strengthened by the devolution of knowledge to local level through various channels. Majority of the members expressed that the skill and expertise of decentralised planning has not been imparted to the Panchayat Members. A good number of the members are not satisfied with the present information support programmes such as training, workshop etc. Majority of them wanted an Information System for decentralised planning in Kerala with online information support and Village Information Centre in each Grama Panchayat. The members wanted to be computer literates and capable of using ICT based services to collect information required for the different phases of planning. They

admitted that formal education and academic qualifications are not the only factors that determine the capability, the experience of the member in socio-political activities and local governance enhances their capability. The study revealed that even though the performance of Grama Panchayat Members of Kerala is not different in many respects, the members of northern and central regions show more commitment and dedication in the local level planning. The Grama Panchayat Members of Kerala have positive attitude towards the modernisation of information infrastructure.

5.1. Introduction

The present study is intended to investigate the information requirements and information use pattern of Grama Panchayat Members of Kerala in the context of decentralised planning. In order to fulfill this aim, seven specific objectives are identified. It is tried to understand the information needs of Grama Panchayath Members, the channels of communication among them, and the preferences in the use of information sources by them. Effort is also made to compare the information use pattern of Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala and to study the use of indigenous knowledge by them. The information base of local level planning and governance in Kerala is examined. The suggestions for improving the information base of local governance and for developing an information system to support Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala are made on the basis of the study.

The information requirements and use of information by the Members of Grama Panchayats in Kerala has to be studied by the information professional as it do not come under the purview of economists or experts in decentralised planning. The present investigation has achieved its objective in identifying the information needs and use of information by the members. The findings of the study would be useful for the experts who design an information system for decentralised planning in Kerala.

A summary of major findings, tenability of hypotheses and suggestions are provided in this chapter.

5.2. Major Findings

The major findings of the study are given below.

5.2.1. General Information

The following are the findings regarding the personal profile of the Grama Panchayat Members:

5.2.1.1. Status of the Members

1. Majority of the respondents (75 per cent) is ordinary Panchayat Members and the members in all other positions such as Presidents, Vice-Presidents and Standing Committee Chairmen are represented in the sample.

5.2.1.2. Sectors engaged Earlier

2. Majority of the Grama Panchayat Members (69 per cent) has political background and the political parties do make use of the services provided by the members to the people of the locality and thus achieve rapport with people. Political affiliation of the members is higher (73 per cent) in the northern region.

5.2.1.3. Age Range of the Members

3. The large majority of the members (72 per cent) of Grama Panchayats in Kerala are young, within the age group 30 – 49. The age wise distribution of the respondents showed that many (40 per cent) of them is below the age of 40. The reduced age profile signals the increasing participation of youth in decentralised governance. It is a positive development and an indicator of greater empowerment.

5.2.1.4. Gender of the Members

4. Majority (61 per cent) of the Grama Panchayat Members are men. It is found that the percentage of women elected representatives is more (39 per cent) than that of the one-third (33.33 per cent) seats reserved for women. The distribution of male members decreases from south (63.55 per cent) to north (58.24 per cent) while the

distribution of women elected representatives shows a regular increase from southern region (36 per cent) through central region (38 per cent) to northern region (42 per cent) . The participation of women in local governance is higher in northern Kerala.

5.2.1.5. Marital status of the Members

5. The large majority (90 per cent) of the Grama Panchayat Members is married and late marriage among unemployed male youth may be one of the reasons for the presence of 10 per cent of unmarried members. The unmarried members are found to be more (12 per cent) in the southern region.

5.2.1.6 The Category of the Members

6. Majority of the members (59 per cent) belongs to general category and the remaining 41 per cent include reservation categories. The members belonging to SC reservation in the universe (7.34 per cent) and sample (7.36 per cent) selected are almost the same. All other categories except ST women reservation with a slight variation show the same trends. The similar features of the universe and sample justifies that the sample selected is a highly representative one.

5.2.1.7. Educational qualification of the Members

7. Majority (79 per cent) of Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala have secondary education and above and 20 per cent of them have graduation and higher qualifications. Members with higher secondary education (20 per cent) and with professional degrees (5 per cent) are more in the central region; members with graduation are more in southern region and members having postgraduate degree are more in the northern region.

5.2.1.8. Affiliation of the Members to Different Organisations

8. A large majority of Grama Panchayat Members (92 per cent) in Kerala has affiliation with political organisations. In the case of number of members who were political activists there is an increase as we move from south to north with 62.62 per cent in southern region, 69.86 per cent in central region and 73.08 per cent in the northern region. They are also associated with voluntary organisations and trade unions. The involvement of members in religious organisations is high in southern region (17 per cent) and the members of northern region (22 per cent) are more associated with voluntary organisations. The affiliation to trade unions is uniform in all regions.

5.2.1.9. Social Activities of the Members

9. About half of the Grama Panchayat Members (50.11 per cent) in Kerala have previous experience in social activities. It is revealed that some of the present Grama Panchayat Members had served in different capacities in the Total Literacy Campaign of 1990 and it shows the involvement of the members in social activities. On the other hand majority of the members (69 per cent) are not associating with the presently continuing Kerala State Literacy Mission programme.

5.2.1.10. Tenure of the Members

10. Majority (64 per cent) of the Members of Grama Panchayat in Kerala has been elected for the first time and some (29 per cent) of the members for the second term. A few (8 per cent) of them have been members for the last three terms.

5.2.1.11. Political affiliation of the Members

11. A good number (45.29 per cent) of Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala belong to Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the Left Democratic Front led by CPI (M), which has political dominance in majority of the Grama Panchayats of Kerala.

5.2.2. Information Needs of Grama Panchayat Members

12. A large majority (97 per cent) of Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala indicated that they require information in planning activities and the need for information is more among the members of central region (98 per cent).

13. A large majority (97per cent) of the members of Grama Panchayats agreed that they were contacted by the people of the locality to get information and more members of northern region (99 per cent) have reported this.

14. Majority (79 per cent) of the Grama Panchayat Members expressed that they are able to provide information required by the people of the locality and the performance of the members of northern region (82 per cent) in this regard is better.

15. The information requirements at different phases of decentralised planning are not met properly as indicated by the majority (57 per cent) of the Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala and more members of central region (59 per cent) are of this opinion.

16. Majority (64 per cent) of the Grama Panchayat Members experience uncertainty in decision making due to lack of relevant information in local level planning. More members (65 per cent) from central region feel the lack of information. The

uncertainty in decision-making would naturally lead to failure in achieving the goals.

17. Majority (54 per cent) of Grama Panchayat Members indicated their requirement for information mainly to keep up-to-date in their daily activities of local level planning and governance. The preference of the members showed that majority of them required information not for meeting their personal needs but for some other important purposes. The members from northern region give less importance to information to satisfy personal needs.
18. Majority of the members indicated that they need information to keep up-to-date in daily activities of local governance and it justifies the high mean index (3.30) computed for this option. More members (60 per cent) of southern Kerala require information to keep up-to-date in daily activities. Majority of the Grama Panchayat Members consider the requirement of information for other purposes as least important and in northern region no member needs information for other purposes than the mentioned.
19. A good number (49 per cent) of Grama Panchayat Members agreed that they need information mainly for planning activities and the requirement is highest (50 per cent) among the members of northern region. The analysis of preferences to the information sources showed that majority of the Grama Panchayat Members need information for purposes other than political and educational activities. However, some of them need information for educational purposes and comparatively the requirement is high among the members of northern Kerala.
20. The information requirement for occupational activities is not the primary need of the majority of the Grama Panchayat Members and more members of southern region need information related to occupation. Majority of the members consider

the information needs for 'other purposes' as least important. They require information for other purposes only after satisfying their needs mainly for planning activities and then for educational, political, occupational activities.

21. Majority (52 per cent) of Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala prefers to use information for the 'preparation of development report' and the use of information for this purpose is more among the members of central region (63 per cent) and a good number (31.49 per cent) of the respondents prefer information requirement for 'plan formulation' as their first preference. It is found to be the second preference to a good number (46 per cent) of the respondents. The requirements of information in the different phases of planning are found to be higher for the 'preparation of the development report' and for 'plan formulation'. They require less information in the phases of 'plan evaluation', 'plan implementation', and 'monitoring and evaluation'.

5.2.3. Information Sources of Grama Panchayat Members

22. Majority (61 per cent) of the Members of Grama Panchayat in Kerala is awareness of the information sources relevant to the decentralised planning and the members of northern region (64 per cent) are more conscious of the information sources.
23. Majority (69 per cent) of Grama Panchayat Members of Kerala consider that the training programme/workshop are relevant in providing required information for decentralised planning and more members of northern region (74 per cent) are of this opinion.
24. Majority (57 per cent) of the members agreed that the handbooks/manuals distributed in training programme/workshop are relevant. More members (61 per cent) from southern Kerala have this opinion.

25. Government Orders and Circulars are found to be relevant in providing information for majority (61 per cent) of the members. More members from southern Kerala consider these sources relevant.
26. Majority (79 per cent) of the Grama Panchayat Members collect information from other relevant sources as well to meet the information requirements in different phases of decentralised planning and the members of northern Kerala (84 per cent) are much ahead in collecting information from other sources.
27. A good number (39 per cent) of members depend telephone as their first option to get required information. Many (32 per cent) of the members depend on colleagues for getting information. Telephonic enquiries and clarifications from colleagues cater to the information needs to Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala. Both of them involve human elements and hence interpersonal communication among members is found to be very important. It is also found that internet is less used by the members.
28. Training programme/workshop is the most preferred source by the majority (62 per cent) of the members followed by handbooks/manuals, colleagues, mass media, and staff of Government Departments. Being the prime information source the training programme/workshop has to be made more effective. More members of northern region (68 per cent) consider training programme/workshop as their first option for getting information.
29. Large majority of the members rated training programme as 'useful' or 'very useful' Hence, in order to make it very useful for the majority of the members, the training programme has to be strengthened and made more effective by conducting at District or Block levels.
30. The printed materials supplied in the training programme are found to be 'useful' for majority (57 per cent) of the members Many (40 per cent) rated them as 'very

useful' too. It indicates the necessity of improving the content of printed materials in order to make it more useful to the majority of Grama Panchayat Members. The rating of the printed materials by the members is irrespective of regions.

31. Majority (60 per cent) of the members consider the handbooks/manuals supplied to them in the training programme as 'useful' and a sizable number (38 per cent) of them are of the opinion that these are 'very useful'. Therefore it should be revised and made more useful to all the Grama Panchayat Members.
32. Government orders and circulars are 'useful' for the majority (57 per cent) of members and a considerable number of them (38 per cent) rate it as 'very useful'.
33. It is found that the information sources are uniformly useful to the Grama Panchayat Members of Kerala irrespective of regions.
34. The Grama Panchayat Members belonging to the age group of below 30 and above 60 are found to be more benefited with the information sources. The members below the age of 30 are new comers elected for the first time and they are more dedicated to the activities of local level planning and governance. The members above the age of 60 are more experienced than the others. Their experiences in the socio- political activities and local governance are very helpful and they likely to use more information sources.
35. There is significant difference in the usefulness of information sources among the members of different status. The Panchayat Presidents use more information sources than the members as they are supposed to be in need of more information in their official capacity.
36. There is no difference in the use of information sources among the male and female members of Grama Panchayats in Kerala.

5.2.4. Communication Channels of Grama Panchayat Members

37. The skills of decentralised planning in Kerala have not been effectively imparted to local level as opined by the majority (56 per cent) of the members and more members of southern region have this view.
38. Majority (64 per cent) of the Panchayat Members in Kerala does not experience any difficulty in communicating with the resource persons and the beneficiaries of the locality and it is found that the members of southern and northern regions are alike in this aspect of communication. However, more than one-third of the members experience difficulties in communicating with the trainers as well as the beneficiaries.
39. About half of the members of Grama Panchayats in Kerala are aware of the presence of barriers in communication in decentralised planning which adversely affects their performance. The presence of barriers in communication is more perceived by the members of the central and northern regions of Kerala.
40. Majority (66 per cent) of the Panchayat Members are aware of the differences in the communication processes in 'People's Planning' and 'Kerala Development Programme'. The awareness of differences in communication is more visible among the members of northern region. However, a considerable number (34 per cent) of members are not aware of the differences
41. 'Print media' and 'resource persons' are the main channels of communication through which the skills and expertise of decentralised planning are imparted to local level. The 'print media' is preferred by many (30.34 per cent) of the members and equal number (29.66 per cent) preferred 'resource persons' followed by 'digital media' and 'Government publications' (13 per cent each). The Grama Panchayat Members utilise communication channels irrespective of regions.

42. *Panchayath Raj* is found to be the one of the most popular Government publications used by large majority of Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala and the acceptance of this periodical is uniform in Kerala irrespective of regions. A large majority of the members (95 per cent) use this publication to develop their skills.
43. *Janapadham*, another Government publication is less popular among the Grama Panchayat Members of Kerala as there are negative responses from a good number (47 per cent) of the members. However, a few of the members prefer this periodical as the second one and the unawareness of the members about this source of information is a general phenomenon.
44. *Kerala Calling* is the least popular Government publication among the Panchayat Members of Kerala. However, the members of central region are found to be comparatively more familiar to the periodical. The ignorance about this periodical is also the part of unawareness of the Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala about the information sources.
45. *Gramabhoomi*, a Government periodical which covers articles on rural development and related matters that are very useful to the Panchayat Members is found to be less popular among the Panchayat Members of Kerala. It is preferred as the second publication by 18 per cent of the members. The members of central region show familiarity to this publication to certain extend. However, it is not known to the majority of the members. This also indicates their unawareness of information sources.
46. Majority of the Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala does not refer other Government publications as well to improve their skills in local governance. In fact they are unaware of the information sources in the field of planning and local

governance irrespective of regions. It is strange that they have not heard the names of publications such as Yojana, Kurukshetra, The Journal of Rural Development and The Journal of Local Governance.

47. 'Complexity of technical terms used' in the deliberations and 'lack of language fluency' are the major barriers in communication among the Grama Panchayat Members of Kerala and these barriers are common to the members irrespective of the regions. The barriers in communication among the members lead to lack of talent and confidence in local planning and governance.
48. Majority (87 per cent) of the Grama Panchayat Members of Kerala use newspapers 'always' to get the required information related to local level planning and the use of newspapers by the members is more in the southern and northern regions (90 per cent each) than the central region.
49. Majority of the Members of Grama Panchayats is not the regular users of Government orders emanated from the Departments of Government of Kerala. However, some of them (39 per cent) use Government orders 'always' depending upon the status. The members who use Government orders 'always' are found to be more in the central region (46 per cent).
50. Majority (62 per cent) of Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala makes use of radio 'sometimes' to get information useful for decentralised planning and the overall use of radio is found to be more among the members of southern region, 44 per cent of them use radio 'always' and 59 per cent use radio 'sometimes'.
51. Majority (53 per cent) of Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala use television occasionally for getting information related to decentralised planning and this pattern of use are shown by majority (62 per cent) of members of northern region.

Good number of the members uses television very often and this tendency is found to be more among the members of southern region (61 per cent) of Kerala.

52. The use of digital information/internet is very less among the Grama Panchayat Members of Kerala. Majority (52 per cent) of them never use digital information/internet to get useful information for decentralised planning due to their unawareness of digital media and the lack of skills in using computers. Some of the members (45 per cent) utilise digital information at times and majority of the members of the central region (51 per cent) shows this tendency.
53. Majority (53 per cent) of Grama Panchayat Members of Kerala do not use books as a source of information regularly for developing their skills and expertise in decentralised planning. A good number of them (44 per cent) use books 'always' and the use is higher in the central region (48 per cent). The use of books at times is higher among the members of northern region (56 per cent).
54. The Grama Panchayat Members who depend research organisations 'always' to get expert opinion for the different phases of decentralised planning are very less (6 per cent). However, majority (59 per cent) of them depend research organisations at times. The members of southern (65 per cent) and central regions (62 per cent) show tendency to depend more on research organisations occasionally in getting expert opinion. More than one-third of them (35 per cent) never depend on such organisations to get expert opinion.
55. A good number (46 per cent) of Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala depend on persons with local knowledge 'always' to get their opinion and it is more in the southern region (63 per cent). The occasional dependence on persons with local knowledge is higher among the members of central and northern regions.

56. Majority of the Grama Panchayat Members of Kerala contacts experts to get their opinion. Some of them (36 per cent) depend on experts very often to get their valuable suggestions in different phases of planning. The tendency to contact experts often decreases gradually from southern region to northern region.

5.2.5. Local Knowledge in Decentralised Planning

57. Large majority (97 per cent) of Grama Panchayat Members considers local knowledge as an important source of information in decentralised planning and the opinion of the members is uniform in Kerala irrespective of regions.

58. Large majority (96 per cent) of the members of Grama Panchayats in Kerala require local knowledge to be collected and used for planning activities in certain development sectors, as the local knowledge is significant. With respect to this opinion there is a regular increase in the number of members from southern region (94 per cent) to northern region (97 per cent) of Kerala.

59. A large majority of the members (89 per cent) is of the view that a database of local knowledge is useful in decentralised planning, as the local knowledge once collected can be used in future, if a database is created. It is noticed that the members of northern region expressed very much for the need of a database and there is a regular increase in the number of respondents from southern (83 per cent) to northern region (93 per cent).

60. Local knowledge is of great importance in decentralised planning as opined by large majority (96 per cent) of Grama Panchayat Members. It is found to be 'very useful' for majority (62 per cent) and 'useful' for a good number (34 per cent) of members. There is a regular increase of this view from southern region to northern region.

61. Local knowledge is extensively used by the Grama Panchayat Members in majority of the development sectors of decentralised planning in Kerala. The mean index computed to local knowledge showed that it is of much importance in the sectors of Agriculture and Irrigation, Animal husbandry and Fisheries, Drinking water and Sanitation, Culture, and Health. It is also revealed that the use of local knowledge in Agriculture and Irrigation, Education, Industry, Energy and Housing and Resource Mobilisation increases from southern to northern region.

5.2.6. Awareness of Digital information among Grama Panchayat Members

62. Majority (63 per cent) of the Grama Panchayat Members are not computer literates. However, more than one third (37 per cent) are computer literates and among them more members (43 per cent) are in northern region. As large volume of information is available in the web and the use of digital information is very essential in decentralised planning. The lack of skills in using computer and internet is likely to affect the performance of the members.

63. Very few of the Grama Panchayat Members (0.23 per cent to 2.53 per cent) indicated the use of digital information in different development sectors and comparatively the members of the northern region use internet/digital information more than the other two regions. In many of the development sectors useful information is available in the internet and large majority of the members are unable to make use of the required information. Hence they solely depend on training classes, very limited print media and interpersonal communication.

64. The use of digital information is found to be higher among the members having postgraduate degree and professional degree. The use of digital information depends on the educational qualification of the Grama Panchayat Members. Majority of them do not use digital information due to lack of proper education.

65. Majority (55 per cent) of the Grama Panchayat Members agreed that they do not use digital information. There is no association between the use of digital information and the status of the Grama Panchayat Members. The election of Panchayat Presidents, Vice-Presidents and Standing Committee Chairmen from among the members is not based on any other criteria than the political one; much difference in the capacity of the members of different status cannot be expected.
66. There is also no association between the use of digital information and gender of the Grama Panchayat Members.
67. A large majority (94 per cent) of Grama Panchayat Members favours the application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in local planning and governance as the existing information support is inadequate. The opinion of the members about the application of the ICT in local governance is independent of the three regions of Kerala.
68. A large majority (90 per cent) of the Panchayat Members indicated that a Digital Local Government Information Centre is necessary for the local bodies in Kerala. A gradual decrease in the opinion is noticed from south to north. This shows that even though the members are not computer literates, they possess positive attitude towards the application of ICT in local governance.
69. Majority (51 per cent) of the members indicated their preference to establish Digital Local Government Information Centre at KILA and the acceptance of KILA to act as the nodal centre decreases from south (59 per cent) to north (47 per cent).
70. Large majority (87 per cent) of Grama Panchayat Members expressed that online information service should be provided through the computerisation and networking of local bodies in Kerala in order to overcome the existing

inadequacies of information support to decentralised planning. It is also found that the members of central region of Kerala were particularly for the computerisation and networking of local bodies.

5.2.7. Information support to Decentralised Planning in Kerala

71. A large majority (93 per cent) of the Grama Panchayat Members indicated that knowledge of decentralised planning has to be devolved to local level along with devolution of powers and more members of the northern region (95 per cent) favour this opinion.
72. The knowledge of decentralised planning has not been fully imparted to local level as opined by majority (57 per cent) of the Panchayat Members. The skills and expertise of local level planning imparted to the members are not satisfactory due to the presence of communication barriers and inadequacy of capability building programmes. A regular increase in the number of members with this view is noticed from southern region (50 per cent) to northern region (62 per cent).
73. The libraries of the locality are found to be not useful in imparting knowledge of decentralised planning as indicated by majority (54 per cent) of the members. It means that the local libraries are not fully equipped with resources for providing information support to the Grama Panchayat Members in the different phases of local planning and the role of local libraries in imparting knowledge of decentralised planning to the local level is not significant. A regular increase in the number of members with this opinion is noticed from south (43 per cent) to north (62 per cent).
74. A large majority (94 per cent) of Grama Panchayat Members indicated the need of Community Information Centres in the villages to provide development information to the Panchayat Members as well as the people of the locality. It is

found that almost all the members of the central region (98 per cent) support this view.

75. Nearly 70 per cent of the Panchayat Members need the CICs to be started in the local library. More members from northern region (77 per cent) expressed this view. However a sizable number of members (30.11 per cent) are not in favour of establishing CICs in the local libraries. It is found that majority of Grama Panchayat Members favour of starting CICs in local libraries and more of them are from the northern region.
76. There is an urge to establish Community Information Centres in the Grama Panchayats of Kerala as suggested by majority (62 per cent) of the members to provide information services to the public. More members from southern region are of this opinion.
77. There is a need to strengthen the training programmes for the members of Grama Panchayats in Kerala as indicated by majority (56 per cent) of the members. However a sizable number of members (39 per cent) indicated the networking of Panchayat Raj Institutions. The members of the northern region are more (63 per cent) with the view of strengthening training programme and more of them from central region prefer networking of Panchayat Raj Institutions.
78. A strong information base is essential in Kerala for local planning and governance as opined by the large majority (90 per cent) of Grama Panchayat Members and there is an increase in the number of the members who put across this view from south (88 per cent) to north (91 per cent).

79. The information base of Kerala is not capable of supporting decentralised planning as indicated by majority (52 per cent) of Grama Panchayat Members and more members from the central region (51 per cent) are of this view.
80. The information base of decentralised planning in Kerala is really weak. A good number of members (47 per cent) indicated that the information base of decentralised planning is very weak and equal number of them (47 per cent) considers it as strong. Majority (53 per cent) of the members of central region consider it as very weak and majority (54 per cent) of the members of northern region consider the information base as strong.

5.2.8. Capability Building among the Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala

81. The experience of the members in participatory planning has developed their capability as indicated by large majority (94 per cent) of the Panchayat Members and more members from central region (96 per cent) are of this view.
82. The capability of Grama Panchayat Members is related with the formal education as opined by large majority (94 per cent) of the members and more members of the central region (80 per cent) favour of this view.
83. Majority (53 per cent) of the members agreed that the academic qualifications and the capability of Grama Panchayat Members are related. It is found that more members of the central region (64 per cent) have this opinion.
84. A large majority (96) of the members agreed that the knowledge acquired through formal education is useful. More members from northern region favour this opinion.
85. There is high association between use pattern of government orders and the status of the respondents. It is found that Grama Panchayat Members in higher status use

Government orders regularly in order to develop their capability and the members are not using these orders regularly.

86. The use of Government orders is significantly higher among the male members than the female members. A good number (42 per cent) of male Panchayat Members use Government orders very often and the use by the female members is comparatively low (34 per cent).
87. The capability of Panchayat Members in using Government orders has no relation with their educational qualifications.
88. The members need local level training programmes including training in the use of computers. They also expressed the need for Community Information Centre in each village, computerisation and networking of Grama Panchayats and an Information System for decentralised planning in Kerala. The members also suggested ensuring the participation of middle class especially the educated and employed people in the Grama Sabhas so as to have lively and effective discussions related to the development of the locality.

5.3. Tenability of Hypotheses

On the light of significant findings drawn out from the study, the tenability of hypotheses framed for the study is tested.

5.3.1. Hypothesis 1

The Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala do need various types of information in local level planning and their information needs are not properly met.

It is revealed through **the findings 12 and 17 to 21** that most of the members require information in local level planning in order to keep up- to- date in the daily

activities of planning and local governance. They require information mainly for the preparation of development report and plan for formulation. **The findings 13 and 14** show that majority of members are contacted by the people to get information and they satisfy the people by providing information with constraints. The information required for decentralised planning is not imparted to local level. The people experience uncertainty in decision making as the information requirements of planning are not properly met. **This is proved by the finding 15 and 16.**

A large majority of the members are of the opinion that knowledge has to be devolved to local level and there should be provision for online information service through the computerisation and networking of Grama Panchayats. **This is proved by the findings 70 and 71.**

The training is one of the major capacity building programmes for the members. Majority of them wanted to strengthen the training programme to make them more capable. As the information base of local level planning is weak, it is not capable in supporting decentralised planning. Some of the members believe that the networking of Grama Panchayat would facilitate the easy flow of information. **This is established by the findings 77 to 80 and 88.**

Hence the first hypothesis is substantiated.

5.3.2. Hypothesis 2

Interpersonal communication is the main source of information of Grama Panchayat Members and they are not fully satisfied with the existing information sources.

Majority of the Grama Panchayat Members are aware of the present information sources in decentralised planning. The training programme/workshop,

handbooks/manuals, and Government orders/circulars are found to be relevant and they collect information mainly through telephone enquiries. Colleagues are also found to be a major source. The training programme/workshop are the main source of information in terms of satisfaction. The telephone, colleagues and training programme/workshop engages of human involvement and hence the main source of information is the interpersonal communication. **This is proved by the findings 27 and 28.** The Grama Panchayat Members rated handbook/manuals, other printed materials and Government orders/circulars as useful only, **as per the findings 29 to 32.**

The members do not experience any difficulty in communication with the resource persons of the training programme and the beneficiaries of their locality. The members are aware of the barriers of communication and the difference in the communication of development information in People Planning and Kerala Development Programme. The significant barriers in the communication among the members are complexity of technical terms used in the deliberations and the lack of language fluency. **The findings 38, 39 and 40 prove this.** Majority of the members are elected for the first time and they lack previous experience. Most of them have secondary education level. **This is proved by the findings 7, 10 and 47.**

The members mainly depend on the resource persons and printed media to get the required information. Out of the print media, Government publications are preferred by majority of the members. *Panchayat Raj* is the most popular periodical preferred by the members in the area of local planning and governance. The other publications such as *Janapadham*, *Kerala Calling*, and *Gramabhoomi* are not popular among the members. They are unaware of the other publications that provide information in local governance and rural development. **This is proved by the findings 41 to 46.**

The usefulness of information sources by the Panchayat Members depends on the region, age, status and gender. **The findings 33 and 36** revealed that there is no

difference in the use of information sources among the members of different regions and among male and female Panchayat members. The members below the age 30 and above 60 are more benefited by the information sources. There is also significant difference in the use of information sources by members of different status, as per **the findings 34 and 35.**

According to **the findings 48 to 51 and 53** the Grama Panchayat Members utilise different sources and media to get the required information. The newspapers, television and persons with local knowledge are used very often to get information on decentralised planning. Radio and research organisations are rarely utilised. The use of books, Government orders and local experts are moderate. Majority of the Grama Panchayat Members is not computer literates and they also do not show interest to use digital information available in the internet. **This is evidenced by the findings 52 and 62.**

This hypothesis is substantiated.

5.3.3. Hypothesis 3

The information use pattern of Grama Panchayat Members of the three regions is similar. The Members are active, participative and dynamic in local governance irrespective of the regions.

The study established that information use pattern of Grama Panchayat Members of the entire three regions is not identical. **The findings 2 and 5** show that the members have more political affiliation and the participation of women in local governance is higher in northern region. As per the finding **7 and 8**, members with post graduation as well as political affiliation are more in northern region and most of the members in the north are associated with voluntary organisations also.

As per **the findings 13, 14 and 17 to 19** the members of northern region are more contacted by the people to get information and they are more able to provide information to them. They use information primarily for planning activities. And as per **the findings 22, 23, 26 and 27** the members of northern region are more aware of the information sources and they collect information from several sources. And they are more satisfied with the training programme.

They are more aware of the differences in the communication of two plan periods and they depends more on persons with local knowledge to get information, as indicated by **the findings 40 and 56**. The importance of local knowledge is better understood by the members of the northern region and they rate local knowledge as very useful in decentralised planning and favour the creation of a database of local knowledge. They use local knowledge more in different development sectors than the two other regions, according to **the findings 58 to 61**.

The computer literacy of the members is more among those of northern region of Kerala and they make use of digital information. **The findings 62 and 63 confirm this**. They believe that knowledge of decentralised planning has not been devolved to local level. **The findings 71 to 73 prove this**. They are of the opinion that the Community Information Centres should be established in the local library and the information base has to be strengthened by training programme, as specified **by the findings 77 to 80**.

As such the Grama Panchayat Members of the northern Kerala are more active, participative and dynamic in local governance than the members of other regions.

Hence the third hypothesis is not proved.

5.3.4. Hypothesis 4

The local knowledge has been used extensively in decentralised planning and these have to be collected and properly organised.

Majority of the Grama Panchayat Members has agreed that local knowledge is very important and hence it has to be collected and organized as per the **findings 57 and 58**. The local knowledge is useful in the different phases of decentralised planning and the collected local knowledge has to be organised properly. The creation of a database of local knowledge is very helpful in local planning. **The finding 59 establishes this**. The local knowledge is found to be very useful to the Members of Grama Panchayat in Kerala. The majority of members prefer to use local knowledge in different development sectors. Agriculture and Irrigation, Animal husbandry and Fisheries, Drinking water and Sanitation, health, culture, etc., are the sectors in which the members prefer to use local knowledge. **This is confirmed by the findings 60 and 61.**

This hypothesis is validated.

5.3.5. Hypothesis 5

The lack of awareness of digital information hinders the performance of Grama Panchayat Members and their capability to use web resources has to be strengthened.

The majority of the Grama Panchayat Members are not computer literates and they have no skills in using computer. Their use of digital information is very less or they never use it. **This is confirmed by the findings 52 and 62**. The use of digital information in different development sectors of decentralised planning is very less.

But, they prefer to use digital information in some selected areas of development. **This is proved by the findings 63.**

The use of digital information and the educational qualification of the member are closely related. The members having higher educational qualification are using more digital information. However, there is no association between the use of digital information and the status of Panchayat Members. There is also no difference in the use of digital information by the male and female members. **This is indicated by the findings 64 to 66.** Even though the members do not have computer literacy, they have positive attitude towards the computerisation and networking of Grama Panchayats. The members irrespective of regions favour the application of ICT in local governance, as per **the finding 67.**

A Digital Local Government Information Centre is advocated by the majority of Grama Panchayat Members for the online support in local level planning and governance. This digital information centre can be established at KILA which is a pioneer institution for capacity building of elected representative of local bodies. **This is authenticated by findings 68 and 69.**

The experience of the members in socio political activities and local governance increase their capability. The knowledge acquired through formal education and their academic qualification is also the factors that determine the capability. The previous experience of the members in local governance has brought qualitative changes in them. **This is proved by the findings 81 to 84.**

The Government orders and circulars are very useful in developing the capacity of the members. On the other hand minimum capacity is essential to understand and implement these orders and circulars. There is high association between the use pattern of the Government orders and the status and gender of the members. The members

have suggested the starting continuing education programmes in local governance, organising training programmes in the local level and strengthening Grama Sabhas which will develop the capacity of the members. **This is proved by the findings 84 to 88.**

This hypothesis is substantiated.

5.3.6. Hypothesis 6

There is a need of an information system to support local governance as information base of decentralised planning in Kerala is weak and inadequate.

The knowledge related to decentralised planning is not fully imparted to local level and therefore the information base of local planning and governance is weak. The knowledge has to be devolved to the grassroots level through various channels. The existing information base is not capable of supporting decentralised planning in Kerala. **This is established by the findings 71, 72 and 79, 80.**

The libraries as such are reported to be not useful for imparting skills and expertise of decentralised planning. The Community information Centres are to be started in the villages and local library is found to be the ideal place. **This is confirmed by the findings 73 to 76.** In order to strengthen the information base, training programmes has to be organised at local level. The computerisation and networking of Grama Panchayats, establishment of Digital Local Government Centre at KILA and starting of Community Information Centres in Grama Panchayats are necessary to develop an information system for decentralised planning in Kerala. **This is proved by the findings 68, 69, 74, 78, 79 and 88.**

This hypothesis is validated.

5.4 Suggestions for Improvement

Information is considered as the strategic resource for sustainable development and growth of individuals, groups, community and the country. The information needs, its use, the demand for information, feedback and the delivery of information are the different facets of information industry and knowledge management. The changed formats and information resources have led the information professionals to assess the information requirements at intervals. The e-culture is tremendously emerging in the society and it is time to think new methods to identify the changing needs of the users. The availability of information when it is needed, where it is needed and the form in which it is needed improves the ability of individuals, and various organisations. In this context the investigator felt it necessary to examine the information requirements of Grama Panchayat Members in Kerala and the issues there in. The views and comments received from the members enabled the investigator to offer some feasible suggestion for the improvement of the infrastructure at the Grama Panchayat level. It is found that serious efforts are required to raise the knowledge level of the Panchayat Members to participate effectively in the local level planning and governance and to achieve maximum output. The following suggestions are offered to develop the use of information in decentralised planning in Kerala.

5.4.1. Information Requirements

Lack of time is the generally known factor that evades the people in meeting their information needs. Lack of resources, poor access to information sources, information over load and the lack of capability of users are the factors which hinder the satisfaction of user. The information resources and the information system are the pre-requisites for the fulfillment of the information needs. The cost for the collection of information sources and the development of an information system are the inevitable

elements. The mushrooming of information in hard and digital version also necessitates the search for information.

The elected representatives of Grama Panchayat in Kerala require information in both print and non print format to enable them to effectively participate in the process of development. In the context of decentralised planning the information need denotes information regarding local elements. The investigator made an attempt to identify the information needs of Panchayat Members. The data collected through structured and semi-structured questionnaires or interview may not be fully reliable as there are chances for glorifying or suppressing their opinions.

The cross checking of responses using separate profiles such as community profile, the information providers profile and the information needs profile is essential. Some investigation has to be under taken to collect information for these profiles. Therefore collection of primary data from the households is most essential to satisfy the information needs of Grama Panchayat Members.

5.4.2 Information sources

The major sources of information of the Grama Panchayat Members are found to be the resource persons of the training programme, colleagues and staff of the Government Departments. The local knowledge, print media, audio visual media are also found to cater to the information needs. *Panchayat Raj* is the only Government publication known to them. Therefore more print sources may be made available to the members either through the library of the locality or an information centre may be started in the Grama Panchayat with all essential print sources of information. The Grama Panchayat having its own library in the vicinity may take decisions to function it as an information centre also. In the other cases one of the major libraries of the panchayat or Akshaya-e-Centre may act as the information centre.

The government of Kerala may take a decision to start information centres in each Grama Panchayats for the dissemination of development information. Broad band internet connectivity is also essential in the CICs to provide web based information services. When the information system for decentralised planning becomes a reality, all the CICs would be connected with Digital Local Government Information centre at the central hub preferably at KILA. The CICs should be staffed with an information professional having proficiency in information technology. The Grama Panchayats have to be computerised and brought in the network. Thus the access to digital information sources by the Panchayat Members, staff and the general public of the locality would be a boon to the digitally divided majority of Kerala.

5.4.3. Capacity Building of Grama panchayat Members

The training programme organised by KILA is found to be useful for the members. They have also pointed out some suggestion to improve the training. The training programmes have to be organised at District or Block level in order to achieve better participation. The training in the use of computer may also be provided. The Panchayat Members are not highly educated but they have a positive approach towards the modernisation of Local Governments with the application of ICT. Short term courses in decentralised planning and local governance would enhance the capability of the members. Classes by experts and professionals at regular intervals, monthly seminars and discussions on special topics and the regular use of Government orders and circulars will make the members more competent to take part in developmental activities. Wide publicity has to be given among the educated and employed middle class people of the locality to participate in the Grama Sabhas. Healthy discussion on the different aspects of local level planning would definitely enhance the capability of the members.

5.4.5. Digital Local Government Information Centre.

The joint efforts of KILA, Information Kerala Mission, Akshaya Project and Kerala State Library Council are required to stream line the digital information for local governance. KILA may be identified as the central hub of the digital information system. The digital information centre can be accessed by a large number of users, geographically distributed. This centre would be very relevant in any environment where people have to spend more time to reach the library than to access and acquire the information. The main objective of the digital information centre is to act as a computerised information storage or data bank facility maintained for the purpose of providing various types of information on local self governance and planning, to all of them connected with it. The specific objectives of the centre consist of collecting all primary and secondary information, data, documents required for local planning and governance in electronic form. The collected data or information must be organised for its easy access and retrieval by local functionaries, the use of information through computer networks and to disseminate appropriate information and data on its demand and in anticipation.

This Centre should create a comprehensive electronic database of already existing and emerging body of knowledge, idea and information on all aspects of local governance. Easy access to the database by the policy makers, researchers, trainees, functionaries of local bodies and the general public through online or other digital means. Local governance and planning are interdisciplinary and complex activities; which require knowledge and information from various disciplines and sources. A huge body of development information emerges from the research institutions in Kerala. The local development functionaries have no access to the required information as they are not available in a digestible and comprehensive manner at any centre. Such information and knowledge need to be collected and made available to the elected members in a

manner easily usable by them. The Centre should act as a facilitator, which bridge the gap between the available body of information and its users.

5.4.5 Information System for Decentralised Planning and Local Governance

Decentralisation had created a unique paradox in the matter of expertise. It was at the grassroots level that the largest portion of plan resources was made available for planning. However the staff in the civil service available at this level was the juniors who lacked the experience of planning and development administration. Therefore building up Expert Support System and Decision Support System is essential for tackling the lack of talent in the local level. The latest possibilities of ICT have to be exploited for the establishment of an efficient, effective and accessible Local Self Governments.

5.4.6. Computerisation and Networking of Grama Panchayats

A very few of the Grama Panchayats of Kerala has completed computerisation and some of them are in the initial stage. A time bound action plan is necessary to complete automation in all the Grama Panchayats. The networking of the entire Local Self Government Institutions such as District Panchayat, Corporations, Municipalities, Block Panchayats and Grama Panchayats has to be undertaken by a competent agency.

5.5. Suggestion for Further Research

On the basis of the findings of the present study the investigator would like to suggest the following areas for further research.

- a. The present study can be replicated for the members of Block Panchayats, District Panchayats or the Councilors of Municipalities and Municipal corporations.

- b. The information requirements of the users in other sectors of governance can be undertaken.
- c. The information literacy of the elected representatives can also be studied.

5.6. Conclusion

The elected members of Grama Panchayat in Kerala need various types of information in their daily activities of local level planning and governance. The lack of awareness of the majority of the members about the information sources and the scattering of information sources make it difficult to get the relevant information at the right time. An efficient information system is necessary to support any development activity in the society.

The decentralised planning started in Kerala more than ten years back still lack an efficient information system. In spite of several capacity building programmes for the members, the skills and expertise required for decentralised planning is not fully imparted to local level. Majority of the members elected through political considerations only are not competent enough to participate in local governance. The lack of availability of development information under one roof is found to be another reason for the weak information base of decentralised planning. Some of the Grama Panchayats have achieved more development with the contributions made by either local expert, panchayat staff, Panchayat President or all of them. Majority of the members is of the opinion that the information infrastructure of the decentralised planning in Kerala is not satisfactory. They need the information sources, better training and awareness in the use of digital information to develop their capability. They also propose to establish an information system that support decentralised planning in Kerala. In order to bridge the digital divide that is apparent in the Kerala society. The study concludes that the information and knowledge base of decentralised

planning in Kerala has to be made strong by imparting the relevant knowledge to the members of Grama Panchayats. They may be given proper training to develop the theoretical base of local planning and governance and also to make use of the conventional and digital resources.

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APPENDIX I
QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is intended to collect data for the study of Information Requirements and Information Use Pattern of the Members of Grama Panchayats in Kerala. Kindly provide your responses as directed and return the questionnaire. Your co-operation is solicited.

Thanking you,

Dinesan K
Research Scholar (Part time)
Department of Library and Information Science
University of Calicut

Address:
Librarian
Kannur University Campus Library
P.O. Palayad, Thalassery 670661
Ph. 9446369510

10.a) Have you participated in the Total Literacy Campaign of 1990?

Yes No

b) If Yes, what was your role? Resource Person Master Trainee
Panchayat/Ward convener Instructor
Other (please specify)

11. Are you associating with the continuing education programme of the State Literacy Mission? Yes No

12. How long have you been associated with local bodies as elected representative?

Below 2 years Below 10 years
Above 10 years

13. To which of the following political parties you are associated with?

CPI (M)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Congress	<input type="checkbox"/>
CPI	<input type="checkbox"/>	Janatha Dal	<input type="checkbox"/>
Muslim League	<input type="checkbox"/>	BJP	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kerala Congress (M)	<input type="checkbox"/>	RSP	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kerala Congress (B)	<input type="checkbox"/>	RS\P (B)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kerala Congress (J)	<input type="checkbox"/>	NCP	<input type="checkbox"/>
Congress (S)	<input type="checkbox"/>	CMP	<input type="checkbox"/>
INL	<input type="checkbox"/>	Others	<input type="checkbox"/>

PART - B

(Please indicate your response to the following questions by putting '✓' mark in the boxes given under 'Yes' 'No')

	YES	NO
1. Have you been in need of any type of information in the planning activities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Do people contact you to get any type of information?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Are you able to provide the information required by the people?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Do you feel that the information requirements for decentralized planning at different phases are met properly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Do you experience any uncertainty in decision making due to the lack of relevant information in planning?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Are you aware of the information sources from which information is obtained?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Do you feel that the training programmes/work shops provide relevant information needed by you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Are you satisfied with information provided in the printed handbooks/materials?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Do you collect information from different information sources for decentralized planning?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Do you feel that the minimum skills of decentralized planning have been imparted to local level through various channels?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Did you experience any difficulty in communication with the trainers or the members of grama sabha and neighbourhood groups?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Do you feel the presence of any barriers in the communication of information in decentralized planning?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Did you experience any difference in the communication of information in 9 th Plan (People Planning) and 10 th Plan (Kerala Development Programme)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Do you think that knowledge has to be developed to the grass root level along with devolution of powers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. Are you of the opinion that the knowledge of decentralized planning has been imparted to grass root level?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

16. Do you feel that a strong information base is a must for effective decentralized planning?
17. Do Kerala has a strong information base capable of supporting all information requirements in decentralized planning?
18. Do you think that local knowledge has importance in local level planning?
19. Are you of the opinion that local knowledge has to be collected and used in local level planning?
20. Do you think that creation of a database of local knowledge is beneficial?
21. Do you believe that any qualitative change has been occurred in your concept of development after participating in decentralized planning?
22. Do you believe that formal education of a member is related with the capability of performing the duties in local level planning?
23. Do you think that the academic qualification of a member of Grama Panchayat is related with the capability of performing the duties in local level planning?
24. Are you of the opinion that there should be a community information centre at the locality to provide development information?
25. If yes, do you think that it should be in the library of your locality?
26. Are you of the opinion that information and communication technology has to be used in local governance?
27. Are you a computer literate?
28. Is it desirable to have a digital local government information centre for the three-tier local bodies?
29. Do you feel that facility for online information service has to be provided through a network of the three-tier local bodies?
30. Do you believe that the government orders and circulars provide the required information?

PART – III

(Please indicate your responses to the following questions in the order of preference by writing 1, 2, 3, 4, ... in the boxes against the options furnished)

Section A

1. Please rank the following options for which you require information

- a) To satisfy personal needs
- b) To provide information to others
- c) To keep up-to-date in the daily activities
- d) Any other (Please specify)

2. Please indicate the order of preference of the following options that you use to get a particular information

- a) Telephone
- b) Internet
- c) Print Media
- d) Colleagues
- e) Any other (please specify)

3. Please indicate the order of preference of the following options that you use information

- a) Political activities
- b) Planning activities
- c) Educational activities
- d) Occupational activities
- e) Any other (please specify)

4. Rank the following phases of planning on the basis of your information requirements:

- a) Preparation of the development report
- b) Plan formulation
- c) Plan implementation
- d) Monitoring and Evaluation
- e) Any other (please specify)

5. Rank the following information sources in terms of your satisfaction in getting information

- a) Training Programme/Workshop
- b) Handbook/Manual
- c) Mass media
- d) Colleagues
- e) Staff of Government Departments
- f) Any other (please specify)

6. Rank the following channels of communication in the order of effectiveness in providing skills of local level planning

- a) Print media
- b) Audio visual media
- c) Government publications
- d) Resource persons
- e) Digital media
- f) Any other (please specify)

7. Among the following government publications suggest your order of preference in terms of their use

- a) Panchayath Raj
- b) Janapadham
- c) Kerala calling
- d) Gramabhoomi
- e) Any other (please specify)

8. Rank the following barriers of communication in your experience

- a) Lack of ability in public speaking
- b) Lack of language fluency
- c) Complexity of technical terms
- d) Lack of formal education
- e) Lack of time
- f) Inability of resource persons
- g) Any other (please specify)

Section B

(For questions 9 to 15 three options are given. Please put a '✓' mark in the box against your option)

9. How do you rate local knowledge in decentralized planning
- Very Useful Useful Not useful
10. How do you rate the knowledge acquired through formal education in decentralized planning?
- Very Useful Useful Not useful
11. Your remarks about the training programme you have attended
- Very Useful Useful Not useful
12. Your remarks about the printed materials distributed in the training programmes
- Very Useful Useful Not useful
13. How do you rate the handbook/manuals supplied to you?
- Very Useful Useful Not useful
14. How do you rate the government orders and circulars in decentralized planning?
- Very Useful Useful Not useful
15. The information services provided by the libraries of your locality in decentralized planning
- Very Useful Useful Not useful

Section C

16. Indicate your preferences of the information sources in the following development sectors by writing 1, 2, 3, 4..under the respective information sources against each sectors (Please note the example given)

Development sectors	Information sources					
	Local knowledge	Concerned Government office	Training Programme	Print Media	Audio Visual Media (TV/Radio)	Internet
Eg: Education	6	4	1	2	3	5
Agriculture and Irrigation						
Animal Husbandry and Fisheries						
Health						
Education						
Industry						
Energy and Housing						
Transport						
Drinking water and sanitation						
Women and Development						
Welfare of SC/ST						
Culture						
Welfare of Weaker section						
Resource mobilization						



17. Suggest your option in the use pattern of the following information sources for getting the required information by putting ‘✓’ mark in the appropriate column against each item

Information	Always	Sometimes	Never
Newspapers			
Government orders			
Radio			
Television			
Digital information/Internet			
Books			
Research organizations			
Persons with local knowledge			
Experts			

Please indicate the responses among the options given by putting mark in the box provided against your first choice.

18. Which of the following is the most appropriate choice to provide information services to the members of Grama Panchayat?

- a) Form a network of Panchayath Raj Institutions
- b) Strengthen the training programme
- c) Continue the present system
- d) Any other (please specify)

19. Which of the following is the most appropriate choice to provide information services to the general public?

- a) Establishment of Community Information Centre
- b) Make the libraries as an information centre also
- c) Let them know from the concerned Government officers
- d) Continue the present system
- e) Any other (please specify)



20. Which of the following institutions you prefer to provide digital information to the public and the members of Grama Panchayat?

- a) Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA)
- b) Information Kerala Mission (IKM)
- c) Akshaya-e-centres
- d) Any other (Please specify)

21. What is your opinion about the information base of the decentralized planning in Kerala?

- a) Information base is not necessary
- b) Information base is very weak
- c) Information base is strong
- d) Information base is very strong
- e) Any other (please specify)

22. Kindly provide suggestions to devolve knowledge to the grass root level along with the devolution of power.

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)
- e)

Thanking you for your co-operation