

Information Seeking Behavior of Zila Panchayat Members of Almora and Pithoragarh District in Uttarakhand: A Study

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ABSTRACT

The present study is intended to investigate the comparative study of the Zila Panchayat Members of Almora and Pithoragarh District of Uttarakhand. In order to fulfil this aim, three specific objectives are identified. It is tried to understand the information use pattern of Zila Panchayath Members, the channels of communication among them, and the preferences in the use of information sources by them. The suggestions for improving the information base of local governance and for developing an information system to support Zila Panchayat Members in Pithoragarh and Champawat District are made on the basis of the study. The present investigation has achieved its objective in identifying the information needs, use pattern, channel of communication and use of information sources by the members.

Keywords: Communication channel, Information seeking behaviour, Use pattern, Zila panchayat

INTRODUCTION

“Information seeking is a natural and necessary mechanism of human existence.” In other words Information behaviour is the outcome of convinced components of the information use atmosphere. The component could be; the conscious, and perhaps unconscious, hypothesis made as to what constitutes a solution, or, better said, a resolution of problems, and what makes information useful and valuable in their contexts. Every individual in the society whether he is a student, a researcher, a specialist, a layman, a professional, an industrialist, a worker, a child or an aged person needs information of one kind or the other. Human being is considered as the most intelligent

animal among the animal kingdom. He strives hard to make his life comfortable by acquiring knowledge through various methods like observation, experiments etc. In this process he makes use of available information by applying different methods. (Menou, 1993).

Information is a basic need of human beings. Information is needed by all walks of life. Information is needed for socioeconomic development. People need information for decision making. The flood of information has therefore to be controlled, analyzed so as to derive maximum benefit. This implies taking steps to ensure that the available information reaches the right user and there can possible be no better institution than

a library for collection, analyzing, storing and disseminating right information to the needy user on one hand and to find and locate right user for right information on the other hand libraries are thus indispensable for the society for meeting its information needs (Mohammed and Khan, 2005).

Information

Information is described as processed structured data. It is one of the essential commodities needed by mankind in all walks of life. Information means the communication of knowledge about an event of a given condition or the spread of knowledge derived from observation, study or experience. We receive information throughout the day. When we awake, the radio, T.V. and newspaper give us information about what went on while we slept. The milkman, the grocer, the mail and others also provide us with different types of information. At the workplace, we receive and give information from and to our seniors, peers and subordinates. We call up family, friends and acquaintances together information on a variety of matters. We visit the library and scan journals for information that would help us complete an assignment. In short there is no area of life that information does not touch. Information is the product of different types of human activities and events, or incidents.

Information Seeking Behaviour

According to Case, "Information seeking is a conscious effort to acquire information in response to a need or gap in your knowledge. Information seeking behaviour encompasses information behaviour as well as the totality of unintended or passive behaviour as well as purposive behaviour that do not involve seeking, such as avoiding information (2002).

A widely accepted definition amongst scholars is that information-seeking behaviour begins when someone realizes the existence of an information need and ends when that need is believed to have been satisfied

(Krikelas, 1983). The seeker turns to formal and informal sources of information and is ultimately satisfied or dissatisfied with the end result (Wilson, 1999). The theories of information-seeking behaviour tend to differentiate between immediate needs, the related activities of which are deemed to be "information-seeking behaviour," and deferred needs, which many researchers have termed "information gathering" (Krikelas, 1983).

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Campbell (2000), trying to define information needs is problematic, in a sense that information one does not currently possess is information that one cannot describe in its entity. He states that an information need is that which is lacking, and therefore the lacking information should be sought in order to satisfy the information need. Anwar (2004) investigated the information seeking behaviour of working journalists in Kuwait using a self-administered questionnaire. The findings indicated that 'human' sources, internet, and 'press releases' are considered high in terms of both importance and satisfaction. Shokeen and Kaushik (2002) had attempted to assess the information seeking behaviour of social scientists of four universities in Haryana. It was found that qualification, status and teaching experience had no effect on the number of visits to the library.

Objective of the Study

The main objectives of the present study are as follows:

- To find out the information needs of Zila Panchayat Members of Almora and Pithoragarh District in Uttarakhand in the context of local level planning.
- To analyze the information use patterns of the Zila Panchayat Members of Almora and Pithoragarh District in Uttarakhand.
- To identify the channels of communication among the Zila Panchayat Members of Almora and Pithoragarh District in Uttarakhand.

- To know the existing sources used by the Zila Panchayat Members of Almora and Pithoragarh District in Uttarakhand.

Importance of the Study

In the present age of information it has been increasingly felt that who serves readers better information needs and users must become the central focus of attention. In any library and information system, the user study plays a vital role in planning, designing and introducing new information services and products and to assess the quality of services and their utilities.

Scope and Limitation of the Study

As the study was intended to cover only the opinion from the selected group of Zila Panchayat members.

Data Collection Method

Questionnaire method of data collection is quite popular, simple random sampling is used for distribution of questionnaire. A questionnaire was formulated keeping in view the objectives of the study. The questionnaire earned the assurance to the users that their response will be kept confidential and will be used for the study purpose. Only one Questionnaire was constructed for Zila Panchayat members.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data collected were analyzed and findings were made using statistical methods. Analysis of data

collected through the questionnaires, observation and personal interaction using both quantitative and qualitative methods provided the investigator the required results to fulfil the four research objectives. Simple percentage analysis was used to study the information needs, use patterns, information sources, communication channels and provide information to the general public in Table 1.

Table 1: District wise status of the Zila Panchayat Members in Uttarakhand

District of Zila Panchayat	Number of Members	Number of Respondents	Number of Respondents (%)
Almora	48	32	56
Pithoragarh	33	25	44
Total	81	57	100

Table 1 shows that out of 81 members of Zila Panchayat in Almora and Pithoragarh District of Uttarakhand, 56% (32) respondents for this study from Almora district and 44% (25) from Pithoragarh District. Therefore, a total of 57 members have been studied.

It is revealed in the Table 2 that out of 57 members of Zila Panchayat in Almora and Pithoragarh District of Uttarakhand, 60% (34) (68.75% (22) in Almora and 48% (12) in Pithoragarh) members engaged as a 'political worker' before the member of Zila Panchayat, followed by 31% (18) (25% (8) in Almora and 40% (10) in Pithoragarh) members engaged in 'other sectors' and 9% (5) (6.25% (2) in Almora and 12% (3) in Pithoragarh district) members engaged in

Table 2: Zila Panchayat Members of Almora and Pithoragarh District according to the sector in which they were engaged earlier

Sector engaged	District					
	Almora		Pithoragarh		Total	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Political Worker	22	68.75	12	48	34	60
Teacher	02	06.25	03	12	05	09
Others	08	25.00	10	40	18	31
Total	32	100	25	100	57	100

‘teaching’ profession before the member of Zila Panchayat.

The distribution of members according to age groups in different districts is as shown in Table 3. It is revealed that out of 57 members of Zila Panchayat in Almora and Pithoragarh District of Uttarakhand, 42% (24) (43.53% (14) in Almora, 40% (10) in Pithoragarh) members belongs in the age group between ‘30 to 39’ years, followed by 40% (23) (40.62% (13) in Almora, 40% (10) in Pithoragarh) members belongs in the age group between ‘40 to 49’ years, and 14% (8) (12.5% (4) in Almora, 16% (4) in Pithoragarh) members belongs in the age group between ‘50 to 59’ years, 4% (2)

(3.12% (1) in Almora, 4% (1) in Pithoragarh) members belongs ‘below 30’ years of age and 0% members of Zila Panchayat in Almora and Pithoragarh District in Uttarakhand belongs ‘above the age of 59’ years.

It is revealed in the Table 4 that out of 57 members of Zila Panchayat in Almora and Pithoragarh District of Uttarakhand, 54% (31) 50% (16) in Almora, 60% (15) in Pithoragarh,) members of Zila Panchayat are ‘male’, followed by 46% (26) (50% (16) in Almora, 40% (10) in Pithoragarh) members of Zila Panchayat are ‘female’.

It is observed in the Table 5 that out of 57 members of Zila Panchayat in Almora and Pithoragarh District of Uttarakhand, 16% (9) (21.87% (7) in Almora, 8%

Table 3: Age group wise distribution of the respondents-

Age group	District					
	Almora		Pithoragarh		Total	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Below 30	01	3.12	01	04	02	04
30-39	14	43.75	10	40	24	42
40-49	13	40.62	10	40	23	40
50-59	04	12.5	04	16	08	14
Above 59	00	00	00	00	00	00
Total	32	100	25	100	57	100

Table 4: Gender wise distribution of the respondents

Gender	District					
	Almora		Pithoragarh		Total	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Male	16	50	15	60	31	54
Female	16	50	10	40	26	46
Total	32	100	25	100	57	100

Table 5: Marital status of the respondents

Marital status	District					
	Almora		Pithoragarh		Total	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Unmarried	07	21.87	02	8	09	16
Married	25	78.12	23	92	48	84
Total	32	100	25	100	57	100

(2) in Pithoragarh) members of Zila Panchayat are ‘unmarried’, followed by 84% (48) (78.12% (25) in Almora, 92% (23) in Pithoragarh) members are ‘married’.

Classification of the respondents based on educational qualifications shows in Table 6 that out of 57 members of Zila Panchayat, 42% (24) (50% in Almora, 32% in Pithoragarh) members are Graduate, 35% (20) (25% in Almora, 48% in Pithoragarh) members are ‘Intermediate’ by educational qualification, 12% (7) (15.62% in Almora, 8% in Pithoragarh) members are ‘High School’, 11% (18) (9.37% in Almora, 12% in Pithoragarh) members are ‘Post graduate’ by educational qualification whereas 0% members to ‘others’ category.

The analysis of the political background of the elected members reveals certain interesting features. As can

be seen from Table 7, a good portion 39% (22) (43.75% in Almora, 32% in Pithoragarh) of the Zila Panchayat members elected in 2014 belonged to ‘INC’ (Indian National Congress), and 39% (22) (37.5% in Almora, 40% in Pithoragarh) members are associated with the political party of ‘BJP’ (Bhartiya Janta Party), 8% (5) (6.25% in Almora, 12% in Pithoragarh) members are associated with ‘UKD’ (Uttarakhand Kranti Dal), 7% (4) (3.12% in Almora, 12% in Pithoragarh) members are associated with ‘SP’ (Samajwadi Party), 7% (4) (9.37% in Almora, 4.0% in Pithoragarh) members are associated with BSP (Bahujan Samaj Party),

It is revealed in the Table 8 that out of 57 members of Zila Panchayat in Almora and Pithoragarh District of Uttarakhand, 42% (24) (37.5% in Almora, 48.0% in Pithoragarh) members are those who are required information for the purpose ‘to keep up-to-date in the daily activities’ followed by 35% (20) (37.5% in Almora,

Table 6: Educational Qualification of the respondents

Educational Qualification	District					
	Almora		Pithoragarh		Total	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
High School	05	15.62	02	8	07	12
Intermediate	08	25	12	48	20	35
Graduate	16	50	08	32	24	42
Post Graduate	03	9.37	03	12	06	11
Others	00	00	00	00	00	00
Total	32	100	25	100	57	100

Table 7: Association of the respondents with political parties

Association with political parties	District					
	Almora		Pithoragarh		Total	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Indian National Congress	14	43.75	08	32	22	39
Bharatiya Janata Party	12	37.5	10	40	22	39
Nationalist Congress Party	00	00	00	00	00	00
Samajwadi Party	01	3.125	03	12	04	7
Bahujan Samaj Party	03	9.375	01	4	04	7
Uttarakhand Kranti Dal	02	6.25	03	12	05	8
Total	32	100	25	100	57	100

Table 8: Type of purpose, the respondents' required information

Type of purpose, the respondents' required information	District					
	Almora		Pithoragarh		Total	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
To satisfy personal need	12	37.5	08	25	20	35
To provide information to others	07	21.87	05	15.62	12	21
To keep up-to-date in the daily activities	12	37.5	12	48	24	42
Any others	01	3.125	00	00	01	02
Total	32	100	25	100	57	100

25% in Pithoragarh) members are required information for the purpose 'to satisfy personal needs', 21% (12) (21.87% in Almora, 15.62% in Pithoragarh) members are required information for the purpose 'to provide information to others' whereas only 2% (1) (3.12% in Almora and no one in Pithoragarh) members are required information for any 'other' purpose.

It is revealed in the Table 9 that out of 57 members of Zila Panchayat in Almora and Pithoragarh District of Uttarakhand, 58% (33) (56.25% in Almora, 60% in

Pithoragarh) members are used the information for 'political activities' followed by 21% (12) (28.12% in Almora, 12% in Pithoragarh) members are used the information for 'planning activities', 14% (8) (9.37% in Almora, 20% in Pithoragarh) are used the information for 'educational activities' whereas only 7% (4) (6.25% in Almora, 8.0% in Pithoragarh) are used the information for 'occupational activities'.

It is revealed in the Table 10 that out of 57 members of Zila Panchayat in Almora and Pithoragarh District

Table 9: Type of purpose, the respondents used the information

Response	District					
	Almora		Pithoragarh		Total	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Political Activities	18	56.25	15	60	33	58
Planning activities	09	28.12	03	12	12	21
Educational activities	03	9.37	05	20	08	14
Occupational activities	02	6.25	02	08	04	07
Total	32	100	25	100	57	100

Table 10: Most appropriate choice to provide information services to the member of Zila Panchayat

Response	District					
	Almora		Pithoragarh		Total	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
From a network of Panchayat Raj Institution	20	62.5	12	48	32	56
Strengthen the training program	11	34.37	13	52	24	42
Continue the present system	01	3.125	00	00	01	02
Total	32	100	25	100	57	100

of Uttarakhand, 56% (32) (62.5% in Almora, 48% in Pithoragarh) members 'From a network of Panchayat Raj Institution' is the most appropriate choice to provide information services to the member of Zila Panchayat, followed by 42% (24) (34.37% in Almora, 52% in Pithoragarh) members are agreed that information services are provided to the members of Zila Panchayat most appropriately 'strengthen the training programme' whereas only 2% (1) (3.12% in Almora, 0% in Pithoragarh) members agreed to 'continue the present system'.

It is observed in the Table 11 that out of 57 members of Zila Panchayat in Almora and Pithoragarh District of Uttarakhand, 42 (24) (37.5% in Almora, 48.0% in Pithoragarh) members are those who are getting information through 'colleagues' followed by 21% (12) (25% in Almora, 16% in Pithoragarh) members are getting information through 'Internet', and also 21% (12) (28.12% in Almora, 12% in Pithoragarh) are

getting information through 'print media' whereas 16% (9) (9.37% in Almora, 24.0% in Pithoragarh) are getting information through 'Telephone'.

It is revealed in the Table 12 that out of 57 members of Zila Panchayat in Almora and Pithoragarh District of Uttarakhand, 27% (15) (25% in Almora, 28% in Pithoragarh) members are getting information from 'Colleagues' followed by 21% (12) (21.87% in Almora, 20% in Pithoragarh) members are getting information from 'handbook' or 'manuals', 19% (11) (21.87% in Almora, 16% in Pithoragarh) members are getting information from 'training program/workshop' and 19% (11) (12.5% in Almora, 28% in Pithoragarh) members are getting information from 'mass media', whereas 14% (8) (18.75% in Almora, 8% in Pithoragarh) members are getting information from 'staff of Government departments'.

It is revealed in the Table 13 that out of 57 members of Zila Panchayat in Almora and Pithoragarh District

Table 11: Respondents used to getting particular information

Response	District					
	Almora		Pithoragarh		Total	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Telephone	03	9.37	06	24	09	16
Internet	08	25	04	16	12	21
Print media	09	28.12	03	12	12	21
Colleagues	12	37.5	12	48	24	42
Total	32	100	25	100	57	100

Table 12: Information sources in terms of respondents' satisfaction in getting information

Response	District					
	Almora		Pithoragarh		Total	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Training program/Workshop	07	21.87	04	16	11	19
Handbook/Manual	07	21.87	05	20	12	21
Mass media	04	12.5	07	28	11	19
Colleagues	08	25	07	28	15	27
Staff of Government department	06	18.75	02	08	08	14
Total	32	100	25	100	57	100

Table 13: Channels of communication in order of effectiveness in providing skills of local planning

Response	District					
	Almora		Pithoragarh		Total	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Print media	14	43.75	16	64	30	53
Audio visual media	09	28.12	06	24	15	26
Government publication	06	18.75	01	04	07	12
Resource persons	03	9.37	01	04	04	07
Digital media	00	00	01	04	01	02
Total	32	100	25	100	57	100

of Uttarakhand, 53% (30) (43.75% in Almora, 64% in Pithoragarh) members said that 'Print Media' as a channel of communication is more effective in providing skills of local planning followed by 26% (15) (28.12% in Almora, 24.0% in Pithoragarh) members agreed that the 'Audio Visual Media' is effective in providing skills of local planning, 12% (7) (18.75% in Almora, 4.0% in Pithoragarh) members said that 'Government Publications' are more effective in providing skills of local planning, 7% (4) (9.37% in Almora, 4.0% in Pithoragarh) members said that 'Resource persons' are more effective channels of communication in providing skills of local planning whereas 2% (1) (0% in Almora, 4.0% in Pithoragarh) members agreed that the 'Digital Media' as a channel of communication is more effective in providing skills of local planning.

It is revealed in the Table 14 that out of 57 members of Zila Panchayat in Almora and Pithoragarh District of Uttarakhand, 35% (20) (40.62% in Almora, 28% in Pithoragarh) members are facing 'lack of ability in public speaking' as a barrier of communication followed by 21% (12) (21.87% in Almora, 20% in Pithoragarh) members have faced 'Complexity of technical term', 16% (9) (3.50% in Almora, 28% in Pithoragarh) members have faced 'lack of formal education' as barrier of communication, 14% (8) (9.37% in Almora, 20% in Pithoragarh) members have faced 'lack of time', 9% (5) (15.62% in Almora, 0% in Pithoragarh) members said that they have 'lack of language fluency' whereas 5% (3) (6.25% in Almora, 4.0% in Pithoragarh,) members said that they have faced 'inability of resource persons' as a barrier of communication.

Table 14: Barriers of communication faced by the respondents

Response	District					
	Almora		Pithoragarh		Total	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Lack of ability in public speaking	13	40.62	07	28	20	35
Lack of language fluency	05	15.62	00	00	05	09
Complexity of technical term	07	21.87	05	20	12	21
Lack of formal education	02	3.50	07	28	09	16
Lack of time	03	9.37	05	20	08	14
Inability of resource persons	02	6.25	01	04	03	05
Total	32	100	25	100	57	100

Table 15: Most appropriate choice to provide information services to the general public

Response	District					
	Almora		Pithoragarh		Total	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Establishment of community information center	10	31.25	12	48	22	38
Make the libraries as an information centre also	17	53.12	12	48	29	51
Let them know from the concerned Government officers	04	12.5	01	04	05	09
Continue the present system	01	3.125	00	00	01	02
Total	32	100	25	100	57	100

It is revealed in the Table 15 that out of 57 members of Zila Panchayat in Almora and Pithoragarh District of Uttarakhand, the most appropriate choice of 51% (29) (53.12% in Almora, 48.0% in Pithoragarh) members for providing information services to the general public is ‘make the libraries as an information center’ followed by 38% (22) (31.25% in Almora, 48.0% in Pithoragarh) members are agreed that information services are provided to the general public most appropriately from the ‘establishment of community information center’, 9% (5) (12.5% in Almora, 4.0% in Pithoragarh) members are agreed that information services are provided to the general public most appropriately as ‘let them know from the concerned Government officers’ whereas only 2% (1) (3.1% in Almora, 0% in Pithoragarh) members are agreed that information services are provided to the general public from ‘continuing the present system’ most appropriately.

FINDINGS

- It is shows in Table 2 in Almora and Pithoragarh District of Uttarakhand 60% of Zila Panchayat Members have political background and only 5% is teachers. The members belonging to others category are not active political activists but may include traders, agriculturists, social workers, students, retired government staff, house wives etc.

- It is shows in Table 4 in Almora and Pithoragarh District of Uttarakhand 54% are male members and 46% are women members. Women enjoy reservation in Local Self Governments.
- It is shows in Table 6 the educational background of the members has direct relationship with the extent of their involvement in different activities. 42% members are Graduate and 35% are Intermediate which is good.
- Members of Zila Panchayats require information mainly to keep up-to-date (42%) in the daily activities and then to provide information to others as can be seen from Table 8.
- Table 9 indicates that the Zila Panchayat member’s information need for ‘Political activities’ is 57%. It is followed by ‘Planning activities’ (21%); ‘Educational activities’ (14%), and ‘Occupational activities’ (7%).
- Table 11 shows that ‘Colleagues’ (42%) is extensively used by the members to get information. The use of ‘Telephone’ (16%) is less when compared to others sources. ‘Internet’ and ‘Print media’ (21%) constitute a very important source followed by Colleagues. As these two sources are related with human elements, they may be treated as sources of interpersonal communication.
- Table 13 shows that ‘Print media’ is found to be

the highest channel of communication (52%). It is followed by 'audio visual' (26%), 'Government Publications' (12%), 'resource persons' (7%) and 'digital media' (2%). The data shows to 'digital media' are very low and others are nil.

- Table 14 indicates that 'lack of ability in public speaking' (35%) is the highest percentage for barriers of communication. The other barriers in the decreasing order of are 'Complexity of technical terms' (21%), 'lack of formal education (16%), 'lack of time' (14%), 'lack of language fluency' (9%) and 'Inability of resource person' (5%). The presence of barriers in communication among the members indicates their lack of ability and confidence in local planning and governance.

CONCLUSION

The elected members of Zila Panchayat in Almora and Pithoragarh District of Uttarakhand 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.

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